

**'We Nepalis'**

**Language, literature and the formation of a Nepali public  
sphere in India, 1914-1940**

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## Abstract

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This thesis examines the processes which led to the emergence and development of a form of Nepali public sphere in India in the early twentieth century. It proposes that an analysis of the rational-critical modes of discourse adopted by this sphere, and their extension into areas of social, cultural and political institutionalisation offers the best way of understanding the formulation of a modern Nepali identity which has proved persuasive to this day. The central chapters focus on the way in which popular publishing built up both a large readership and the infrastructure which was adopted by more discursive journals; the contours, complexities and contradictions of the dominant rhetoric of social progress which they fuelled and propagated; the way in which rhetoric was incarnated in various organisations and social structures, and the extent to which social mobility allowed power relations to be redrawn while other paradigms of exclusion continued to delimit participation in public life; finally, it offers an assessment of the summation of these processes insofar as they contributed to the development of a clearly articulated, self-aware, and delimited sense of Nepali social consciousness and community belonging.

This thesis is based on materials that have been almost entirely ignored by previous historical or literary studies, primarily published Nepali journals and books. It challenges many of the presumptions which underlie traditional approaches to the areas studied and offers specific critiques of a number of influential theorisations of Nepali history and society. At the heart of its analysis is a commitment to understanding the intellectual processes of community conceptualisation and rationalisation as they were experienced and expressed by Nepalis themselves in the period in question. This also entails a detailed dissection of issues of power and authority, of tendencies towards both contestation and the development of normative understandings, and, throughout, of the role of language in enabling and mediating these processes.

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## Note on translation, transliteration and citation

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The primary sources for this thesis are in the Nepali language. With some sadness—for the unstandardised Nepali of this period offers delightful idiosyncrasies, and many writers display untranslatable stylistic panache—but for good reasons of space and readability, prose citations other than epigraphs are presented solely in translation. However, where the original word or phrase is particularly significant, or my English rendering particularly unsatisfactory, I have retained the Nepali in parentheses. For verse, most Nepali citations are accompanied by parallel English translations which aim for literal accuracy rather than aesthetic effect. Meanwhile certain crucial Nepali words (for example, *jāti* and *unnati*) which have no precise English synonym have been used untranslated throughout the main body of the text as well as in citations. Definitions are offered in the glossary and, where appropriate, cross-references to more detailed discussion are provided. Where writers in Nepali have used English words—a device often used for ironic, rhetorical or other stylistic effect—these have been retained in translations indicated by double quotation marks. All translations are mine. Books and journals published in Nepal are dated according to the Vikram Samvat (V.S.) calendar, approximately fifty-seven years ahead of CE. As the calendar years overlap each other (the V.S. new year is in mid-April), the presentation of CE equivalents—e.g. 1917/18 for 1974 V.S.—is necessarily inelegant. The oblique is consistently and exclusively used to indicate V.S. to CE conversions, while an en-dash indicates a range of years. The bibliography lists both dates but the CE date is used in the body of the thesis. If it has been possible to specify precisely which CE year is appropriate (as, for example in publications where the month of release is indicated) then only one CE year appears. Where Nepali writers date particular publications or events in V.S. and it has not been possible to specify which CE year is correct, the oblique formula is used.

Almost all proper names, as well as all Nepali words other than those well established in English, are transliterated with diacritics throughout. However, better-known place names (obviously a subjective judgement) retain their usual English form: thus ‘Darjeeling’ and ‘Kathmandu’ rather than ‘Dārjīlīṅg’ and ‘Kāṭhmāḍaṃ’. (English and local names are not always identical: for example, ‘Kurseong’ represents the Nepali ‘Kharsāñ’, while ‘Kalimpong’ also appears in Nepali as ‘Kālebuṅg’.) For personal names, ‘Krishna’ may be easier to read—and type—than ‘Kṛṣṇa’, and ‘Gyawali’ easier on the eye than ‘Jñavālī’, but I have preferred accuracy and consistency throughout. Some names appear with many slight orthographic variations—Guruñ/Guruṅ/Gurūñ/Guruṅg, Siṃh/Siṃha/Siṃg/Sīñ, etc.—even when referring to the same individual: I have generally chosen to standardise with the currently accepted orthography (in these instances ‘Guruñ’ and ‘Siṃh’). Names that are not native to *devanāgarī* are not transliterated but given in standard roman equivalents, thus ‘Tshering’ rather than ‘Chhirin’. For authors writing in English I have used their own transliterations of their names; for those who have published in Nepali and English I have used both versions of their name as appropriate: thus Kumār Pradhān (1982, 1993) for his Nepali publications, Kumar Pradhan (1984, 1991) for his English

publications. I follow standard usage in referring to many literary figures by first name alone (for a list of the individuals so treated see p. 12). Some writers (such as Vaijanāth Śarmā/Jośī/Sedhām or Tāranāth Śarmā/Nepāl) cause confusion by using various second names, particularly in the case of Brāhmanas who often adopt the generic 'Śarmā' alongside lineage names. In each case I have opted for the more generally preferred form, while noting variants.

I have made no radical breakthrough with regard to the perennial problems of transliterating Nepali, for example the fact that a written *va* is often pronounced as *ba* and thus frequently, if erroneously, transliterated as such; *ba* replaces *va* in many writings of the period under consideration. I have adhered to a moderately Sanskritic transliteration (generally ignoring inherent *a* vowels except where they are pronounced, as when following conjunct consonants: e.g. *dharmā*, *bhaktā*): thus *vikās* rather than *bikās* or *vikāsa*. I have also reluctantly opted for *ch* and *chh*, rather than *c* and *ch*. A greater problem has been that source materials themselves are notably inconsistent, both in their use of native Nepali terms and constructions, and in their spelling of Sanskrit loanwords. I have attempted to retain their original inconsistencies but may occasionally have fallen victim to the subconscious urge towards emendation. There has been one particular problem with a major source: the *Statements of Publications*. Their early entries are inconsistent in their use of limited diacritical markings; later entries provide titles in *devanāgarī* script as well as roman but still use inconsistent transliterations for other details. Hence my transliterations of titles, author names, etc. from these records are often emendations, where possible supplemented by cross-reference to publications which provide the original *devanāgarī*. Other authors' transliterations are left unchanged in direct quotations even if they clash with my system.

At the outset we must deal with a few issues of terminology and definition. Unless explicitly stated otherwise 'Nepal' is used throughout to refer to the Kingdom of Nepal as a political entity (rather than the traditional reference still employed in many sources to the Kathmandu valley) and, where necessary, the strictly English adjective 'Nepalese' is used to denote an inhabitant of that state or to refer to events within its boundaries. 'Nepali' consistently denotes both the language (regardless of the multiple terms found in the sources I cite) and the people of diverse ethnic and caste origins that came to be considered as belonging to the Nepali community (the terminology relating to the definition of Nepali communities—including the changing connotations and patterns of deployment of 'Nepal' and 'Nepali'—forms the focus of 5.2.1). For most purposes one can assume that this roughly equates to peoples whose ancestral homes lie within the current boundaries of the Nepalese state.

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## Abbreviations

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AIGL	All-India Gorkha League
BNRP	Bhāratīya Nepālī Rāṣṭriya Pariṣad
C1, C2	<i>Chandrikā</i> Vol. 1, <i>Chandrikā</i> Vol. 2.
GDNS	Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan
GNLF	Gorkhaland National Liberation Front
GBPS	Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti
GKK	<i>Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat</i>
HA	Hillmen's Association
HPSU	Hill Peoples' Social Union
KGL	Kurseong Gorkha Library
MPP	Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan
NBPS	Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti
NLB	Nepali Library, Banaras
NLK	<i>Nepālī lekhak koś</i> (Bhaṭṭarāī 1999/2000)
NSS	Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan
NSSP	<i>Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā</i>
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collection (of the British Library; includes the holdings of the erstwhile India Office Library)
RIGB	Morris, Captain C.J.. <i>A Report on the Immigration of Gurkhas into Bhutan</i> . Political (External) Department, 1934. OIOC: IOR/L/PS/12/2230 File 9.
Rs	Rupees
SP	<i>Statements of particulars regarding books and periodicals published in the United Provinces</i>
SūDhaPā	Sūryavikram Jñavāī, Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā and Pārasmaṇi Pradhān (the glossary explains this acronym).
UP	United Provinces, subsequently Uttar Pradesh
V.S.	Vikram Samvat (calendar)

Full names of authors and publishers generally referred to by first name alone:

Bhānubhakta	Bhānubhakta Āchārya
Dharaṇīdhar	Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā
Harihar	Harihar Śarmā
Hemrāj	Hemrāj Paṇḍit, <i>rājgurū</i>
Gaṅgāprasād	Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān
Homnāth	Homnāth Khativaḍā
Kedārnāth	Kedārnāth Khativaḍā
Lekhnāth	Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl
Padmaprasād	Padmaprasād Upādhyāya
Pārasmaṇi	Pārasmaṇi Pradhān
Puṇyaprasād	Puṇyaprasād Upādhyāya
Śambhuprasād	Śambhuprasād Dhuṅgyāl
Śikharnāth	Śikharnāth Suvedī
Śeṣ Maṇi	Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān
Sūryavikram	Sūryavikram Jñavālī
Viśvarāj	Viśvarāj Śarmā

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction: the foundations of a Nepali public sphere in India

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वर्तमान संसारमा हामीलाई पनि मानिस झै उभिन मन लाग्छ भने हामीले हाम्रो जातिमा मातृभाषाका माध्यमद्वारा ज्ञान प्रचार गर्नु पर्छ ... अब हामीले खुकुरीलाई खिया पर्न मात्र नदी कलम पो कोर्न पर्यो ।

*If we too want to stand up like men in today's world then we must spread knowledge in our jāti through the medium of the mother tongue ... now we must not only let our khukurīs rust but we must write with pens.*

Sūryavikram Jñāvālī's preface to Motīrām Bhaṭṭa's biography of Bhānubhakta, 1927

आज इतिहासको लगाम छोडिदिएर लथालिङ्ग पार्नु होइन तर इतिहासलाई एउटा धारिलो हतियार बनाएर जातीय गौरवलाई उचाल्नु हो ।

*Now is not the time to release the reins of history and let it lapse into disorder, but to make history a sharp weapon to uplift jāti pride.*

Chandralāl Śarmā's editorial in the revival of Pārasmaṇi Pradhān's journal *Chandrikā*, 1996

Sharp weapons have a nasty habit of cropping up in Nepal's history, such a persistent habit that the curved-bladed *khukurī* has become a national symbol, emblazoned on everything from Nepali passports to Gurkha regimental arms. It was sharp weapons that delivered Nepal to its unifier Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Śāh (think of the severed noses and lips of Kīrtipur's resisting population) and powered its subsequent expansion, but it was the same weapons that led to the fledgling nation's defeat and containment by the East India Company. It was sharp weapons that settled the decisive Kot massacre in Kathmandu which brought the Rāṅās to power in 1846, and those very sharp weapons that are indelibly associated with the bloodshed of Darjeeling's Gorkhaland movement in the 1980s. It is perhaps not surprising that Nepali historiography should have been infected by the glamour and potent symbolism of these knives and their cousins, perhaps not surprising that so many historians should have succumbed to simplistic notions of indomitable bravery as the heart of national identity. Nepal's martial mystique translates well into polished cap-badges and

coffee-table books but has diverted attention from more far-reaching questions of the birth and development of Nepali social consciousness.

This is not another history of sharp weapons. Following Sūryavikram Jñavālī, this thesis turns instead to the pen: not so much to wield it as to examine how it was taken up by Nepalis and turned into a tool for defining themselves and their society. Both writers cited above put their putative weapons into the hand of a people, a *jāti*, and this thesis traces the emergence of *jāti* consciousness. It argues that the deployment of pens in the arena of public discourse shaped this process as much as the battlefield brandishing of *khukurīs*. The intellectual struggle to give birth to a modern Nepali society was every bit as fundamental as the earlier territorial conquests that had established the geographical extent of Nepal. At the turn of the twentieth century the idea of Nepaliness lurked almost unarticulated in the minds of a disparate group of would-be Nepalis. Nepal itself enjoyed a precarious, pretending independence, only confirmed at the grace and convenience of India's British overlords in 1923. The Nepali language hardly dared speak its name and could boast of no official endorsement, even in its homeland. Nepali people—be they in Nepal, in exile, or settled in India—could hardly lay claim to a common name, let alone any elaborated basis of shared culture and society. Few Nepalis indeed had received any formal education, other than traditional religious instruction. Even those who could read had precious little literature to entertain them, and not a single newspaper or periodical to bind them into a single readership.

Yet over the course of a few decades, all this was to change. Nepalis were about to be shaken by a number of revolutionary upheavals without which the subsequent, and better remembered, Revolution of 1950 would have been inconceivable. This thesis contends that the years 1914 to 1940—not exclusively, but most intensely—witnessed the birth of modern Nepali identity, culture and society, and that this birth depended on the construction of a form of public sphere. From a pre-literate, pre-print society emerged, in the space of a couple of generations, a readership of tens of thousands, devouring hundreds of thousands of books and encouraging the birth of diverse journals, most ephemeral and a few long-lived. With the expansion of formal education, there grew an educated middle class. The business of producing and selling books went hand in hand with the development of a

market economy driven by other consumer innovations. And while the first Nepalis with degrees were entering the world of teaching, administration, law or engineering, tens of thousands of peasants' sons were returning to the hills after service in the First World War. Many were clutching cheap copies of titillating verse in folk rhythm, or military histories aimed at the ordinary soldier. Equally, they took back visions of the wider world and a new-found competence in Nepali polished through interaction with comrades of diverse ethnic origins.

The founding fathers of Nepali nationalism, often invoked today as a restrictive and exclusive creed, were strikingly cosmopolitan, and almost invariably moulded by their residence in, or contact with, India. In the footsteps of Motīrām Bhaṭṭa, biographer and champion of Nepali's 'founder poet' Bhānubhakta Āchārya, came other Nepali denizens of Banaras: penniless but idealistic students, revolutionary and reactionary Brāhmaṇ poets, and the larger-than-life entrepreneurs who established the Nepali publishing business with their ventures in leather-bound *Rāmāyaṇas* and hair oil (for the public sphere was funded by commission sales of pocket watches and repeat prints of scurrilous erotic verse as much as it was fuelled by high-minded literary and social endeavour). This was an era when the low-born could rise to wield considerable cultural power, when former subalterns started speaking to a new audience: when the son of a homeless itinerant bookseller (Pārasmaṇi Pradhān) could establish himself as one of the foremost writers, educators, editors and language activists of his generation as well as a strikingly successful publisher; when a Gurung (Maṇisiṃh) of soldiering ancestry in Shillong could earn an arts degree and eventually deliver sermons on social reform from the columns of his own newspaper; when the son of a former palace gatekeeper on the run from Kathmandu (Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān) could become one of the most respected figures in Darjeeling, the first ordained Nepali priest, proprietor of a printing press, paper editor, collector of proverbs, translator and publisher; when another Gurung (Dhanvīr, later to take the surname Mukhiyā), who spent his youth as a cowherd and then a locally renowned *dhāmī* spirit healer, could emerge as Darjeeling's leading theatre director—and producer of the first ever public Nepali drama performance—as well as the founder of its most enduring social organisation, the Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan; when a talented, well-educated, ambitious and impetuous

captain of the Indian Camel Corps (Ṭhākur Chandan Siṃh) could abandon his military career, fall out with his Maharaja employer, become a Congress volunteer and friend of Nehru, and then go on to establish a Nepali school, a major political party (the All India Gorkha League) and a clutch of newspapers.

However, the importance of this period for defining a sense of Nepaliness lay not in the achievements of great men but in the far-reaching social, economic and cultural transformations which enabled them to achieve prominence. This thesis argues that the dynamics of change over these formative years can best be explained by an analysis which addresses the discursive space within which interpretations of identity and belonging were negotiated. It traces the emergence of a modern Nepali community through the development of public culture and the formation of a limited public sphere. It seeks to understand the definition of a modern Nepali identity through detailed investigation of the discourse and debate which took place within a nascent public realm mediated by the Nepali language. This approach stands apart from that of traditional political histories, not least because the examination of public culture is, of necessity, based on public sources. The arguments advanced here are based upon a close analysis of a wide range of published materials of this period, from early periodicals and poetry collections to religious tracts and school textbooks. Yet although dependent upon the tools of literary criticism applied to the written word, this is hardly a literary history. The materials to which most attention is devoted have generally been shunned or ignored by mainstream critics. Moreover, this analysis places more emphasis on the context of production and patterns of consumption of the printed word, on the literary system as a whole, than on the aesthetic merits of selected works. Hence a concern to site early Nepali print culture within a community of writers and readers, and to demonstrate that discursive processes came to be embodied in Nepali institutions, social and cultural structures.

This study is undeniably partial. As is explained below, the materials to which I have had access represent only a limited proportion of the totality of the Nepali writings of this period. A more serious concern, addressed at length in Chapter 4, is whether this entire category of discourse was reflective of social attitudes beyond the limited class of people who were directly involved in its production, dissemination and digestion. Dependence on

written sources in the investigation of a society that was overwhelmingly illiterate risks marginalising factors such as working class solidarity. Various counter-discourses have also been relegated to footnotes. For example, it has not been possible to examine the development of Newar identity which was also taking place in India, related to a Theravāda Buddhism renaissance and a political reaction to the historical loss of state control. Non-mainstream religious reformist movements—such as Nepal’s Josmanī Sant tradition (Janaklāl Śarmā 1995/96) and the disciples of the unconventional *gurū-mā* Yogmāyā (Timsinā et al. 2000), or the adoption of Ārya Samāj philosophies (see glossary)—deserve further study in their own right and for the light they shed on religious counter-currents. Similarly, non-Hindu institutions such as Darjeeling’s Buddhist Association remind us that at the same time as some activists were seeking *jāti* unification, others were suggesting identity alignment on a religious basis, implying that large swathes of the putative *jāti* should view themselves as distinct from the rest of the Hindu and animist/shamanist Nepali community. It has not been easy to research the role of women in public culture, while the construction of gendered private identities and the relationship between domestic and public social relations is only tangentially addressed. Many of these deficiencies have been conditioned by paucity of materials. Newari, for example, saw a much slower development of print than Nepali;<sup>1</sup> non-*sanātan* religious movements left little published work; sources on women writers are few and far between (3.5). Constraints of space have led to other exclusions: originally envisioned separate sections on Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān and the popular singer Mitrasen had to make way as more central themes expanded.<sup>2</sup> Thus this remains a relatively top-down and centrist study, albeit one that seeks to remain aware of this and to be explicit about its limitations. While the analysis of popular literature, women’s writing, and the exclusive tendencies of the public sphere highlight areas of research that would help to counterbalance mainstream perspectives, much work remains to

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<sup>1</sup> The first Newari printed book was produced in fifty copies on a small letter-press in Kathmandu in 1909; the next did not appear until 1920, from a mission press in Bettiya (Kashinath Tamot, personal communication).

<sup>2</sup> These two sections were cut partly because they were not essential to the central argument, and partly because both figures have recently been the subjects of readily available book-length treatments (Kārthak 2001 and Thāpā Magar 2000) which have helped to raise their profile beyond that of most of the marginal writers examined here. Both Gaṅgāprasād and Mitrasen are featured in Appendix 3.

be done. As well as complementing previous approaches, this study demonstrates the potential of several new lines of investigation which would merit further attention.

## 1.1. Critical contexts

### 1.1.1. Locating the Nepali public sphere

This thesis describes the formation of a Nepali public sphere and the processes that took place within it to create a conscious and self-aware Nepali community. As the title implies, it has been influenced by Jürgen Habermas's (1989) concept of 'public sphere' and the fruitful applications of his basic interpretive framework to analyses of South Asian literary discourse and political consciousness presented notably by Dalmia (1997), Naregal (2001) and Orsini (2002).<sup>3</sup> I must emphasise, however, that use of the term 'public sphere' should not be taken to imply direct equivalence between, say, the Nepali and Hindi public spheres, nor the adoption of a rigid model. Naregal's observation (2001: 7) that Habermas's influential analysis of 'the connections between communicative practices, literary audiences, and the political public within modernity' is 'suggestive for the relation between norms of communicative rationality and the distribution of political power in the making of non-Western modernities' strikes the crucial note: that Habermas's theoretical model and methodological techniques cannot be applied prescriptively but may usefully be

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<sup>3</sup> Jürgen Habermas's concept of the 'public sphere' was developed in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), translated into English twenty-seven years after its original publication in German. My use of the term is informed by his work and by essays in *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Calhoun 1992). We should also bear in mind Habermas's translator's note (1989: xv): 'Öffentlichkeit, which appears in the very title of the book, may be rendered variously as "(the) public," "public sphere," or "publicity." Whenever the context made more than one of these terms sensible, "public sphere" was chosen as the preferred version.' Habermas distinguishes several types of Öffentlichkeit: broadly, the 'political public sphere', 'literary public sphere' and 'representative publicness'. It may be noted that while Habermas has gained a reputation as one of the leading contemporary social theorists—whose approach could be broadly categorised as post-Frankfurt School—his work on the public sphere is not generally considered central to his oeuvre. For example, a major recent textbook of sociological theory (Adams and Sydie 2002) devotes a sizeable section to Habermas but does not mention the public sphere at all. This may be partly due to the *Structural Transformation's* late appearance in English and partly due to its historical bias. Nevertheless, the themes examined here—in particular language/communication (which Habermas added to Marx's work/labour as a distinct feature of species-being) and the relation of critical reason to political participation—very much prefigure most of his later, more purely sociological, output on topics such as 'interests' and the ideal speech community. For my introduction to Habermas and the potential relevance of his thinking to South Asia I am indebted to Francesca Orsini, who generously provided me with an early draft of her *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940* (2002).

exploited suggestively. Calhoun (1992: 1) is right to observe that Habermas's study 'is an inquiry at once into normative ideals and actual history', aiming 'to reach beyond the flawed realities of this history to recover something of continuing normative importance': it is this that explains its appeal to many subsequent researchers working within different disciplines on geographically and chronologically diverse scenarios. Nevertheless, Habermas himself (1989: xvii-xviii) emphasised that his 'public sphere' was strictly a 'historical category' rather than a nomothetic construct, that it cannot be 'abstracted from the unique developmental history of that 'civil society' (bürgerliche Gesellschaft) originating in the European High Middle Ages; nor can it be transferred, idealtypically generalized, to any number of historical situations that represent formally similar constellations.'

The proposed Nepali public sphere also exhibits significant limitations that are readily apparent when juxtaposed with the Hindi sphere (Orsini 2002). First, it was numerically small and geographically diverse, lacking a single heartland within India and enjoying an ambivalent relationship with the state of Nepal. Estimates of the total Nepali population in the 1920s tend towards a figure of some six million, of whom the number resident in India was less than one million (1.2). Participation in literary production and public discourse was necessarily limited both by the small size of the public and by low levels of education and literacy in comparison to other Indian communities. Second, the realm of political involvement was circumscribed, either confined to local issues or, in national terms, subordinated to wider models of political consciousness developed in other discursive spheres (4.3.3). Third, engagement with many of the fundamental aesthetic, philosophical, ontological and epistemological preoccupations of the Hindi public sphere was similarly modest: Nepali writers did not wrestle with Marx, Hegel or Kant, nor did they seriously question the basic significance of art and literature. This was partly a result of the relative lack of sophistication of debate but also a reflection of the fact that Nepali intellectuals were able to turn to other languages for mental stimulation. One can safely assume that all writers of this period were literate in Hindi—and the records of various libraries indicate that Hindi journals were part of the Nepali readership's staple diet—while many were also competent in Bengali, English, and other languages (the mini-biographies of Appendix 3

attempt to record the linguistic competence of each of their subjects). We should thus not assume that issues absent from Nepali publications were also absent from consideration. They may simply have not been prioritised because, compared to other Indian communities, Nepalis were presented with a strikingly different existential conundrum: while Indian nationalist thought had to grapple with imaginings of past or potential nationhood, Nepalis already had an independent state on which to focus. The state of Nepal—comprehended as reality, idea or ideal—was important to even the most determinedly Indian of Nepalis: thus Pārasmaṇi, a proud and vocal Indian patriot who did not visit Kathmandu until the 1960s (cf. Pradhan 1997: 95-99), still linked his understanding of Nepaliness to an independent Nepal. Yet Nepal's supposed autonomy as a sovereign Hindu kingdom—a condition to which Indian nationalists or supporters of *hindūtvā* could only enviously aspire—did not furnish convincing answers to questions of ethnicity and nationhood, nor did it alleviate the multiple insecurities of an emergent middle class. If anything, its status prompted a range of doubts over social and political identity which were distinct from those addressed in other cultural spheres. Moreover, while a Hindi-speaking *jāti* might be relatively unproblematically constructed, its Nepali counterpart was a multi- or supra-ethnic formation, with many of its members in the period of study only just beginning to adopt the Nepali language alongside, or in preference to, a multitude of ancestral mother tongues. Equally, while Hindi had to define itself in relation to Urdu, a facet of wider Hindu-Muslim cultural and political identity issues (King 1994), Nepali had to establish its position as a lingua franca for Hindus of varying traditions, Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhists, animists and shamanists.

The Nepali public sphere did not occupy a neatly defined geographical territory. In particular, its bounds were not coterminous either with the kingdom of Nepal (within any of its territorial configurations since its unification) or with any map that could be drawn of concentrations of Nepali populations throughout the Himalayan region and beyond. The concept of the public sphere is one which is primarily—and initially—dependent on a community of letters, a community able to inhabit a more or less unified discursive realm. It is, in the sense within which it must be understood in this thesis, only secondarily a space for the enactment of a political life, or indeed of a national life. In other words, it provides

the space within which a Nepali community could be 'imagined' (to borrow Anderson's phrase) and further elaborated and defined without necessarily reflecting participation in a single sphere of public or political life. This sphere was not, for example, centred on a parliamentary system in which its members had a shared interest; it was not, indeed, based on any entitlement to participation in representative politics.

This was a community of ideas, of a loose sense of belonging and commonality that in the first instance was engendered almost exclusively by a shared language and the community of education and literacy. The people who brought it into existence were spread far beyond Nepal, but concentrated most notably in Banaras and Darjeeling. Both modern Nepalese and Indian Nepali identities had their origin in an inextricably interrelated series of developments over the time period which this thesis addresses. Although there were always specific local issues which could not interest all Nepali readers equally, it is reasonable to characterise the Nepali writers, thinkers, political activists, social reformers, cultural pioneers and publishing entrepreneurs as participants in what was briefly a single public sphere. In subsequent decades the Nepali language and a wealth of shared culture has not been sufficient to bind together Nepalis from Dehradun to Assam in a sense of shared public existence. Ironically, this can be attributed to the rapid expansion of popular involvement in politics both in India and Nepal which is evident from the mid-1930s: while in one sense this represented the consummation of the public sphere as it finally allowed the fulfilment of aspirations fanned by the new potentials of print-capitalism, it also marked its downfall as diverse political goals in separate arenas necessarily overshadowed earlier shared cultural endeavours.

The Nepali language and its speakers had, over the course of centuries, moved eastwards along the Himalayan foothills. By 1769, Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Śāh, king of the small state of Gorkha in central Nepal, had conquered the feuding principalities of the Kathmandu Valley. Before his death in 1775 he had established a programme of expansion that would see his successors extend their rule as far as Sikkim in the east and Kangra in the west. Meanwhile the British East India Company, following its decisive success at the battle of Plassey in 1757, was consolidating its grip on power across northern India. A confrontation inevitably took place, and the British-Nepalese wars of 1814-16 resulted in

Nepal's reluctant acceptance of the Treaty of Sugauli, which greatly reduced its territory. Concomitant with the treaty-making process was a requirement to demarcate the borders between the two polities of Nepal and British India. Burghart (1984) and Michael (1999) argue that this act introduced a new concept of boundaries into an area which had its own traditions of interpreting the limits of political, cultural and spiritual authority. Large scale migration from Nepal to India from the mid-nineteenth century onwards created new settlements of Nepalis, differently constituted in terms of ethnic composition, patterns of class and employment and distribution of power from their communities of origin (1.2.2 and 4.4).

The time period selected, from 1914 to 1940, embraces the years when the Nepali public sphere came to maturity and the outlines of a Nepali identity were delineated. While the roots of developments in this period lay well before 1914 (and this study does frequently draw on earlier materials), the key elements of a discursive public culture—literary production, social and cultural institutionalisation, political involvement, formal education—were in the earliest stages of development.<sup>4</sup> By the second decade of the twentieth century Nepal and India seemed set to enjoy a period of relative political stability: Nepal in the middle of Chandra Śamśer's long premiership, and India settling after the reversal of the partition of Bengal and the move of the capital to New Delhi. Yet the next two decades brought unrest and transformation. First there was the upheaval of the First World War, with its vast mobilisation of Indian and Nepali soldiers. In the wake of this Chandra Śamśer sought, with active British approval and cooperation, to suppress any political change that might be inspired among his population by their experiences of the wider world. Yet, as is demonstrated in Chapter 2 and beyond, the lure of modernity—be it in terms of revolutionary inspiration or seductive consumerism—had already reached the Nepalese hills.

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<sup>4</sup> There are obvious exceptions: Kathmandu and Darjeeling had their regular periodicals, the *Gorkhāpatra* and *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*, Banaras had been publishing books and had produced three literary journals, *Upanyās Taraṅginī*, *Sundarī* and *Mādhavī*. Meanwhile Darjeeling had seen both the start of some political organisation with the 1907 petitioning for separate administrative status by the Hillmen's Association (4.3.3) and significant cultural innovation with the formation of Nepali theatre groups (4.3.1).

Meanwhile India was to see a more direct challenge to imperial rule in the form of the Non-Cooperation Movement, launched from the Nagpur Congress of December 1920. This Congress also lent a new authority to ethnolinguistic conceptions of community by endorsing the principle of reorganising states on linguistic lines. India had already seen far-reaching developments in regional and national identity—for example, in historicising the Bengali *jāti* or imagining a Hindi-speaking nation—and in religious and social reform movements such as the Brahma and Ārya Samāj. The 1920s saw some resurgence in political Hinduism, most notably with the publication of Sawarkar's manifesto *Hindūtvā* in 1923, his disciples' subsequent founding (in 1925) of the Hindu nationalist Rāṣṭriya Svayamsevak Saṅgh, and the revival in the same year of the Hindū Mahasabhā. Alongside this, Nepalis grappled with their own conceptions of community and belonging, often wrestling (as 3.4 illustrates) with apparently contradictory impulses: the urge to return to a supposed golden age of religious purity and cultural perfection competing with calls for economic and industrial modernisation accompanied by social reforms such as the education of women and loosening of caste restrictions. This period saw a surge in education and publishing, resulting in the emergence of a significant readership and the capacity for public debate to be related directly to active involvement in social projects. In this arena the interests of Nepalese Nepalis and Indian Nepalis were generally overlapping and inseparable. The compelling desire to shape a viable modern Nepali identity was not conditioned by an exclusive nationalism but—as Chapter 5 argues—founded upon a community-centred social consciousness and the modelling of a supra-ethnic *jāti*.

By the late 1930s most of the fundamental questions about Nepaliness had been answered. The Nepali language had adopted a central position in the shared cultural life of Nepalis from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The sense that people from this range of backgrounds could all lay claim to a common identity as 'we Nepalis' had been established and propagated. Yet the broad church of a public sphere which had involved such a diverse collection of participants was showing signs of strain. Throughout the preceding few decades, local concerns had been addressed in parallel with issues that related to the entirety of the Nepali community. Most significantly, this community had come—despite its obvious ethnic, religious, caste and cultural diversity—to be widely

considered as a single *jāti*, an achievement of intellectual and emotional unification no less remarkable than Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ's martial and political accomplishments. Yet once these overarching existential conundrums had been resolved there was perhaps less that the Nepali world needed to do as a whole, and more pressing demands confronting sub-spheres.

In the Darjeeling area, crucible for so many pan-Nepali developments, parochial problems started to predominate. For example, the formation in 1935 of the Hill-Peoples' Social Union and the publication of the journal *Nebulā* reflected an urgent and specifically local concern for inter-communal relations between Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. On a larger stage, political movements in India and Nepal started to draw Nepalis' attention. While there was nothing to stop individuals playing a part in both arenas—a striking example being the Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala, whose political career was launched by involvement in anti-imperialist activism in India—there was an inevitable separation of spheres of public life. In particular, it was only during the 1930s that Kathmandu started to claim its rightful place as a centre of gravity for Nepali public affairs beyond the purely governmental. Political development within Nepal suggested a potential independence from India-based Nepalis, and initiated a parting of the ways in long-term political goals. 1936 saw the establishment of the pioneering democratic Prajā Pariṣad (led by the resolutely nativist Taṅka Prasād Āchārya), and a year later the foundation in Kathmandu of the reformist Mahāvīr School. In December 1940, leaders of the Prajā Pariṣad were arrested and in January 1941 four were executed, later to become hallowed as the first martyrs of the democratic movement (Fisher 1997: 92-106).<sup>5</sup> By this stage, Kathmandu had become an indisputable forum for political activities in its own right. The united Nepali public sphere had been a transitory phenomenon.

Beyond Habermas's suggestive model, the analysis presented here in some respects follows Said, not least in its affirmation that texts are 'worldly', that 'even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course

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<sup>5</sup> The first to die, Śukrarāj Śāstrī (4.4), was not a member of the Prajā Pariṣad but promoted the religious reformist Ārya Samāj philosophy: this demonstrates another facet of India's role as a source of ideas considered dangerous by the Rāṇā regime.

the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted' (Said 1983: 4). This underlies a form of textual criticism which differs radically from the general 'unworldliness' of traditional Nepali approaches, in which the social and political implications of writings of this period have been subjugated to a framework of literary values which is internally coherent but detached from historical concerns. Furthermore, this study is—despite its search for an identifiable Nepali 'we'—fundamentally anti-essentialist, highlighting the often conflicting and contradictory multiplicity of factors which interacted in the process of constructing a composite sense of identity. Anderson (1991: 4) takes as the starting point of his argument that 'nation-ness' and nationalism are cultural artefacts: 'To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.' Hobsbawm and Ranger's influential *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) provided added impetus to efforts across disciplines to investigate the construction of cultural formations, efforts which seemed counterintuitive to those whose understandings of community had been shaped by dominant popular discourses of ethnic or national primordially. When he came to write an afterword to later editions of *Orientalism*, Said emphatically reasserted that identity is indeed a construction, and one which for any society involves 'fluid and extraordinarily rich actualities' (2001: 332). Yet 'most people resist the underlying notion: that human identity is not only not natural and stable, but constructed, and occasionally even invented outright. Part of the resistance to books like *Orientalism* ... stems from the fact that they seem to undermine the naïve belief in the certain positivity and unchanging historicity of a culture, a self, a national identity.' Such resistive attitudes have long characterised studies of Nepal by Nepalis and outsiders.

The interpretation of cultural history as the iteration of reassuringly immutable certainties, and the consequent resistance to more sceptical probing of the roots of national or ethnic identity, have patterned and constrained Nepali historiography. While early British historians—and especially those writing on the Gurkhas to this day, as Caplan (1995) conclusively demonstrates—conform to an Orientalist stereotype perhaps more extreme than Said himself ever envisaged, Nepali nationalist historiography (moulded, over the last

few decades, by Panchayat ideology) has provided an equally blunt counterproposition with its retreat into a nativism typified by tendentious assertions of Nepal's eternal independence as the only Hindu kingdom unsullied by colonialism. However, this is not to say that Said's theorisation of the nexus between colonial power, cultural production and epistemology provides a watertight framework within which to assess the developments presented here. His presentation of a seemingly homogeneous Orientalist discourse is concerned with the intellectual history of colonial knowledge; as subsequent critiques—most notably that of Partha Chatterjee (1993)—have demonstrated, it pays little attention to more radical uses of Orientalism as its messages were confronted and reworked in early nationalist thinking. In the case of Nepalis, for example, writers incorporated affirmative British stereotypes of martial bravery and welded them to narratives of ageless Aryan heroism to provide a modern community whose glorious historicity was endorsed by contemporary colonial categorisation (5.4). Many individuals from marginalised ethnic backgrounds managed to parlay their military experience or status into previously unthinkable cultural influence, from the Magar poet Tulāchan Āle whose verses on north-east frontier campaigns penetrated the Brāhmaṇ-dominated Banaras publishing business (2.3.3) to Lieutenant-Colonel Govardhan Guruṅ, whose role as a pillar of the establishment allowed him to play a leading role in many Darjeeling Nepali institutions (4.3.3). Meanwhile, negative stereotypes, most notably of educational and cultural backwardness, were also transformed into inspiration for zealous social reformers (3.2.2).

Such flexible, two-way, and frequently ambivalent interactions suggest a process of self-definition that is hard to reduce to dialectic opposites. Indeed, the comfortable co-existence within the rhetoric of social progress of progressive and regressive arguments—often in the work of a single author—recall Nairn's (1977) depiction of nationalism's inherent paradoxes (3.4.1). Meanwhile, within Nepali discourse itself, issues of representation reflected complex dynamics of power and their renegotiation under the changed circumstances of a novel print community which itself reflected new forms of social control and status (4.4, 5.2.2). That discourses themselves represent and institutionalise power formations has long been recognised by sociolinguistics—one does not need to delve too deeply into Foucaultian knowledge/power equations to realise that the

examination of Nepali discursive processes must address issues of authority and control in the creation, structuring and propagation of knowledge. Questions of the distribution and contestation of power resonate throughout all of the main chapters, from the financial clout of publishers and the economics that drove the development of print (Ch. 1.3), the deployment in journals of normative moral systems and the objectification of women (Ch. 3), control over the dissemination of language through textbooks, participation in institutions and educational elitism (Ch. 4), to the direct claims to authority laid by proponents of language standardisation and the dynamics between traditional hegemonic order and horizontal solidarity in the fashioning of *jāti* consciousness (Ch. 5). These areas offer interesting parallels to research on similar processes in other Indian communities as well as to the forms of colonial knowledge—such as command of language, census enumerations, British-styled education—that have been most elegantly dissected by Cohn (1987, 2002), whose innovative application of anthropological insights to historiography predated Orientalist, post-structuralist and post-colonialist approaches. If colonialism was a ‘cultural project of control’ to the extent that ‘in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about’ (Dirks 2002: ix), so too was the construction of a Nepali identity within a colonial environment conditioned by its negotiation of forms of knowledge, their ordering and exploitation. Equally, the management, contestation and representation of knowledge within the Nepali community was dependent upon what Orsini (2002: 7), adopting the semioticians’ phrase, conveniently terms ‘institutional arrangements’.

Pr̥thvīnārāyaṇ Śāh famously characterised his kingdom as ‘a garden of the four *varṇas* and thirty-six *jāts*’ (see, for example, Shaha 1990: I, 40, Sharma 1992). This enduring metaphor was widely popularised during the Panchayat period, not least as an encapsulation of the idea that a Kṣatriya, Nepali-speaking king could sensitively unite an ethnolinguistically diverse group of subjects. Indeed, it gave the first Nepali ethnographic survey its title (Dor Bahādur Biṣṭa’s *A garden of all jāts*, [1973] 1995). To extend the analogy a step further, the aim of this thesis is to examine the cross-pollination of flowers in the Nepali garden, and to demonstrate that a species of Nepaliness could only come about through a process of evolution, a genetic and cultural miscegenation. When Pr̥thvīnārāyaṇ coined his phrase, European scientists were only just starting to distinguish the patterns of

generational change that would, a hundred years later, be bound into a comprehensive theory of evolution. When Biṣṭa applied the metaphor to his anthropological work, the forerunners of several new approaches to cultural studies—Cohn, Habermas, Said and others—were just appearing on the horizon. Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ's phrase has received countless repetitions while Biṣṭa's book, into its sixth edition and selling almost ten thousand copies by 1995 and in 2002 reissued by Himal Books, remains by far the most widely read anthropological work on Nepal. It is perhaps timely to revisit this garden and re-examine its growth with the benefit of recent theoretical and methodological developments.

### 1.1.2. *The problem of Nepaliness*

There are various pitfalls to be avoided in searching for a Nepali 'identity'. However, this has not prevented recent writers on a variety of Nepal-related subjects seeking to explore the experience of 'being Nepali', and to define a category of 'Nepaliness'.<sup>6</sup> The abstract noun represents an essence of ethnic or national identity which is an important concern of much recent historical writing: echoing Said's 'Frenchness' and 'Englishness' (which he himself uses in quotation marks, 2001: 332), for example, Orlando Figes resorts to a similarly ungainly 'Russianness' to introduce his major new cultural history of Russia (2002). While 'Nepaliness' may appear an unwieldy neologism in English, it has a lengthy pedigree in Nepali and translates both the widely used *nepālīpan* and the less common *nepālītva*. The Nepaliness that this study seeks to understand is not that applied by outsiders but that consciously adopted by its own referents, a clearly articulated we-as-subjects rather than an externally labelled us-as-objects. In essence, and in terms contemporary to the period of study, this demands a searching analysis of Sūryavikram Jñāvālī's (1918b: 18) 'what we mean by saying "we" (*hāmro "hāmī" bhannu je ho*)', an

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Whelpton ('Being Nepali ... means different things to different Nepalis', 1997: 39), Hutt ('The literature suggests that an inescapable part of being Nepali in the world beyond Nepal's borders is that you must struggle for the right to belong. Your solace must be that you are Nepali, with whatever meaning you invest in that label', 1997b: 13; and 'Being Nepali without Nepal', 1997a), Kumār Pradhān ('the feeling of saying "we" (*hāmī bhanne bhāvanā*)', 1982: 16). 'Nepali identity' is a central concern of Bandhu (1989) and Onta (1997a). One of CK Lal's most recent weekly columns in the *Nepali Times* was entitled 'We Nepalis. How to make Nepalīpan more inclusive' (2003b): this indicates that the themes of this thesis may be of interest and relevance to current political commentators as well as to academic writers.

analysis of Nepali 'we-ness'.<sup>7</sup> This thesis is predicated upon the novelty of articulations of Nepali identity and structurings of Nepali community within a distinctly modern timeframe. Yet Whelpton (1997: 40) rightly cautions against assuming a complete lack of national identity before this period, arguing that while 'the fully articulated and self-conscious nationalism which the school system and mass media promulgate today' may be a borrowing from nineteenth-century European ideology via the Indian nationalist movement, a process of 'cultural amalgamation and the growth of a sense of identity between hitherto disparate elements ... was underway before the importation of western political ideas could play any significant role'. Whelpton goes on to identify loose but nonetheless distinct cultural bonds between the Hindus of the Himalayas east of Kumaon which set them apart from other Hindus of South Asia. He notes that the early use of Hinduism as a source of legitimation for the Gorkha state built on the expanding base of a Chhetri caste that included many offspring of unions between Khas or Brāhmaṇ males and women from Tibeto-Burman-speaking ethnic groups such as the Magars or Gurungs. In other words, the story of a twentieth century public sphere must not ignore the models of kinship, loyalty and political belonging which supported the Gorkha state. We may then assess more accurately the transformations that took place with the advent of a print-based culture of public discourse.

As Pratyoush Onta has convincingly demonstrated (1996c), histories of Nepal and Nepalis have generally been confined to a narrowly political and state-focused approach.<sup>8</sup> However, recent trends in historiography have highlighted new topics for research, modes of interpretation, and categories of source materials. Onta has brought approaches inspired by Indian historians to the study of early literary and publishing efforts among India-based Nepalis. His work here is, however, part of a wider project on the history of Nepalese

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<sup>7</sup> I was alerted to the significantly differing concepts of 'we-ness' and 'us-ness' and their potential value in dissecting situations where nationalism overlaps with multiple ethnic and linguistic identities by Eriksen's useful article on contemporary Mauritian nationalism (1994).

<sup>8</sup> There are exceptions, for example the pioneering work in economic history of Mahesh Chandra Regmi (e.g. 1972, 1978), and a limited number of studies in recent years focusing on Indian Nepalis (e.g. Timsina 1992, Upadhyaya 1998, Bhandari 1996; not counting the many books on the Gorkhaland movement and subsequent developments) and the histories of particular ethnic groups within Nepal.

nationalism, and has not addressed the content of early writings in any detail. Scholarship on the twentieth century history of Nepal has tended to concentrate primarily on tracing and explaining the origins of nationalism and the same is true to some extent for India. With due respect to the valuable *démarche* of the Subaltern Studies scholars, relatively little attention has been paid to the narratives of smaller communities, especially those which do not lend themselves so neatly to instant categorisation within a nationalist framework. In this context, the study of identity formation among Nepalis mainly based in India can offer a valuable counterpoint to accounts of more straightforwardly national developments in both Nepal and India. Meanwhile, despite the productive investigation of (predominantly middle class) social consciousness in India (notably by Chandra (1992) and Kaviraj (1995)), such efforts have not been transferred to the challengingly fractured and fractious consciousnesses of Nepalis within either ethnic or supra-ethnic frameworks.

As noted above, most Nepali writers, influenced by the monolithically essentialising bases of Panchayat nationalism, have found it hard to resist the strong temptation of primordial approaches. Such attitudes, perhaps influenced by the ethnographic race to record Nepal's 'authentic' cultures and communities which shaped post-1950s anthropological studies, can still be observed in some recent international scholarship. Writing of the Kathmandu-based anti-Rāṇā political leader Ṭaṅka Prasād Āchārya, Fisher (1997: 4) observes that 'unlike most other Nepalese politicians, such as B.P. Koirala... who lived much of his life, and received much of his education, in India, Tanka Prasad is an unadulterated Nepali'. This may be a throwaway remark in an otherwise thoughtful presentation, but the concept of an 'unadulterated Nepali' remains disturbing, as well as revealing of attitudes that have hindered the investigation of pre-1950 Nepali history. Here 'adulteration' stands for a thinly veiled anti-Indian prejudice, in concord with the nationalism of Panchayat-era and current Nepali politics but recalling nothing so much as the straightforwardly institutionalised racism of Gurkha officers' suspicion of Indian-born line-boys. Thus for Fisher, Ṭaṅka Prasād is welcome to develop his democratic ideals from a wide reading of European political philosophy. His unadulterated status is apparently guaranteed merely by a symbolic rejection of Indian influence, a rejection which must be partly disingenuous: Ṭaṅka Prasād even named his Prajā Prariṣad while on a visit to

Calcutta with fellow activist Daśarath Chand, inspired by the name of a party active in Jammu (Fisher 1997: 78). An increasing number of nuanced studies of Nepali hybridity and modernity are now appearing but the conflation of isolation with authenticity has been a feature of many writings until recently.<sup>9</sup> The study of Nepal—and hence Nepaliness—has been indelibly marked by the Lévi-inspired ‘fossil state’ view (Onta 1997a) that its academic value lies in its unspoiled preservation of ancient culture, be it as a museum of ‘India in the making’ or of unblemished ethnic experience. Anthropologists have perhaps—in the mould of the Gurkha officers who first wielded their disciplinary tools on Nepal’s ‘martial tribes’—preferred their natives to be truly native. This could be one reason why, despite the volume of work on Nepal, there is not a single significant anthropological study of any of the more mixed Nepali communities in India.<sup>10</sup>

The quest for unsullied ur-cultures has similarly infected Nepali scholarship with an unthinking tendency towards essentialist solutions to cultural issues. Of course, this cannot be attributed solely to modern researchers: the reductionist and normative approach to cultural and racial categorisation inspired by colonial administrative scholarship as well as Hindu precept is already more than evident in Jaṅg Bahādur’s *Mulukī Ain* (1854; see Höfer 1979), with its elaborate codification of castes and ethnic groups into a supposedly immutable hierarchy. Yet the attraction of such neat understandings of community, ethnicity, and belonging continues to lure writers today. For too many analysts, language, culture and identity are eternal and immutable categories rather than variable configurations. Culture and identity are then seen to be ‘preserved’ or ‘protected’ rather than created or transformed and the potential fluidity of cultural identification and behaviour is ignored. Thus Dillīrāj Śarmā (1995/96a: 60) argues that from its inception Nepali

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<sup>9</sup> Within anthropology, Ortner (1989) and Holmberg (1989) laid the basis for much work in the 1990s which revised essentialist interpretations of ethnicity (cf. Mishra 2003: 16–18). The major edited collection on nationalism, ethnicity and the politics of culture in Nepal (Gellner et al. 1997) brings together many significant contributions to this area, while Gellner’s introduction sounds the death knell for primordialist approaches with the pithy conclusion that ‘the problem with primordialism is, in short, that the identities it postulates are unproblematic’ (1997: 10–12).

<sup>10</sup> While Tanka Subba has turned towards more anthropological work in eastern Nepal (1999), his earlier research on Darjeeling Nepalis (1989, 1992) is distinctly sociological in its concerns and methodology. The comments on Nepalis in Sikkim by Japanese anthropologist Chie Nakane (1966) have rightly been questioned by Ling (1985).

journalism in India brought an awareness of the need for ‘protection’ (*rakṣā*) of *jātitva* and culture, and that language and culture were the essential means for ‘preserving’ the *jāti*’s *jātitva*. Such a position contrasts with the social reformist attitudes that many early language activists saw as indivisible from their language-related campaigns, which were also explicitly self-aware in their exploitation of cultural malleability. One could argue that this reflects a powerful strand of neo-conservatism in the critical/interpretive tradition, especially within Nepal. Of course, primordial understandings were also present among Nepalis of the period under consideration in this thesis. Images of the ‘sleeping *jāti*’ (most famously expressed by Dharaṇīdhar’s ‘Awake, awake, awake, now awake! ... Now leave your deep sleep’<sup>11</sup>) reinforced the primordial-mythical image of the *jāti* as something that does not need to be constructed, merely aroused from long slumber. To take Śarmā again, Indian Nepalis today are of interest to Nepal’s Nepalis in that they bear some of the ‘essence’ of an original or authentic Nepali culture. They ‘have culture’ inasmuch as they can be seen to have retained distinctly Nepali traditions (*ibid.*: 65): ‘Nepalis are rich in culture. This *jāti* that is rich in culture, wherever it may be and however it may have gone there, can be seen to be following in some form its own culture and beliefs. It is an important special feature of this that even until this day one can see Nepalis outside Nepal following *jātiya* traditions, *dharma*, *saṃskāra* and festivals.’ Similarly, Śailendu Prakāś Nepāl’s analysis of ‘national’ songs (1998: 58-59) typically takes for granted the historicity and immutability of Nepali nationhood and *jāti*-hood, highlighting the nationalistic use to which Bhānubhakta and Motīrām are readily put: ‘One can find the auspicious start to the task of giving poetic form to country and *jāti*’s pride and bravery in Nepal from the very earliest times ... later if *ādikavi* Bhānubhakta’s poem ‘Amarāvātī kāntipurī nagarī’ is filled with national awareness then the young poet Motīrām Bhaṭṭa ... in his expression ‘Achal jhaṇḍā pharkos’ displays Nepalis’ *jātiya* self-respect.’ As the following chapters demonstrate, analyses such as these—which owe much to a nationalistic hindsight that

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<sup>11</sup> These are the opening words of a seminal poem (Koirālā 1918b) addressed to the Nepali *jāti*, summarised by Devīprasād Sāpkoṭā (1920a: 4) as ‘You have remained long in deep sleep ... now arise and awake’. A few months before this poem’s first publication Śrīmatī Modinī (1918: 16) has similarly cried out to *Chandrikā* that ‘Our *jāti* has fallen into an overpowering sleep!’.

seeks to find images of itself in earlier periods—are at least anachronistic, not to say simplistic.

To return to Fisher's comments on Ṭaṅka Prasād, his concept of an 'unadulterated' Nepaliness lends credence to a deeply reactionary political stance. While Ṭaṅka Prasād was a staunch opponent of the Panchayat regime, the idea that multiparty democracy was fundamentally 'foreign' to Nepal, an adulteration of its culture, was used to support King Mahendra's claim that a democracy 'guided' by the monarch and bereft of political parties was best suited to Nepal's people and history. This thesis proposes that it was, in a certain sense, the very 'adulteration' of Nepalis that enabled the construction of a widely shared sense of belonging in a Nepali community. There is a *prima facie* case that Nepaliness—in either its early twentieth century, Panchayat era, or multiple current constellations—has been shaped and remoulded by historical events and actors. For the creation of a composite Nepali identity, a degree of 'adulteration' was a necessary condition, indeed an inescapable condition occasioned by the various harbingers of modernity—transport and travel, communications and print, consumerism and market capitalism—that left an indelible mark on even the innocently unadulterated hill farmers who were drafted into the First World War. From the opposite side of the political spectrum to the Panchayat ideologues an equally dubious argument has been expressed to me during the course of this research by, among others, a leading *janajāti* academic: that the history of Nepal's ethnic minorities is exclusively oral, and that the investigation of their contributions in Nepali to cultural developments shared beyond their own communities is effectively an invalid exercise in itself. But this writes out of history the achievements of remarkable—and hugely influential—cultural producers such as the Magar soldier, singer and writer Mitrasen (who has at least been much written about: see Appendix 3). In its most concentrated reduction, such an interpretation suggests that the spread of the Nepali language and its adoption by speakers of other languages, was an exercise of ruthless state dominance coupled with a more or less deliberate effort to extinguish individual, 'authentic', ethnic languages and solidarities. It is not the aim of this thesis to argue that either perspective is entirely wrong—although in their more extreme manifestations they both demand a degree of false consciousness or deliberate self-blinding to counterpropositions—but that they simply

cannot explain the fundamental processes of social change among Nepalis of all castes, communities, and political persuasions that the twentieth century witnessed. Instead, it contends that we need consciously to deconstruct historical and cultural assumptions and, as the public sphere itself did, to problematise issues that have previously been unquestioned.

### *1.1.3. The Nepali critical tradition*

Nepali literary history and literary criticism have developed, in a relatively short space of time, into sophisticated and well-populated disciplines.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, this thesis argues for fundamental revisions to the preoccupations of most literary studies to date, and presents several specific critiques of academic practice. Of these, the chief are that literary histories offer a narrow interpretation of what constitutes 'literature'; that the established canon is restrictive and unrepresentative; that criticism has become an overly moral endeavour incapable of dispassionate analysis; that the location of critics and their personal assumptions have limited their perspectives; and that literary histories have consistently failed to pay attention to audience and readership. We may also note the general problem that literary scholarship has not engaged productively with other disciplines (just as they, in turn, have hardly concerned themselves with written traditions).

Little attention has been paid in Nepali to questioning what literature is, and what types of writing should fall within the ambit of literary criticism. This is a significant lacuna, not least because it has allowed unstated moral or didactic presumptions and personal prejudices to dictate the range of works that are considered worthy of study. A striking illustration of this is Dayārām Śreṣṭha's authoritative work on the principles of literary history (2002): he devotes the first twenty-eight pages to defining 'history' and tracing the development of philosophies of history but at no point contemplates the definition of

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<sup>12</sup> For general introductions in English to Nepali literature see Khanal (1973), Subedi (1978), Pradhan (1984), Hutt (1988). Major studies in Nepali include Śarmā ([1970/71] 1994/95) and Śreṣṭha & Śarmā (1977). Critics such as Īśvar Barāl (e.g. 1996/97, 1998e, 1998/99) and Kamal Dikṣit (e.g. 1979/80, 1991/92) have written many articles on Nepali literature produced in India. There is no space here to rehearse the entire history of Nepali literary studies. Śreṣṭha (2002: 69-84) includes a useful account of the development of literary historiography, while Prasāi (1997/98) offers sketches on the life and work of twenty-three major critics, while his enlarged later work (2000/01) includes a sample essay by each writer.

‘literature’. Such acceptance of an unstated understanding of what qualifies as ‘literature’ is almost universal: as a further example, Prasāī’s sizeable study of Nepali literary critics and criticism similarly goes to some pains at the outset (2000/01: 33-34) to define ‘criticism’, carefully dissecting the Sanskrit term *samālochanā*, but does not pay comparable attention to ‘literature’. Such attitudes underlie the exclusion from previous studies of almost all of the materials examined in this thesis (as explained in 1.3 below). While writers do not expressly address what is included in ‘literature’, they are often quick to pass judgement on what is to be excluded. Thus Adhikārī (1977: 40) dismisses Medinīprasād Regmī’s *Jñān bhaṅga taraṅgiṇī nāṭak*, a farce published by the Bhārat Jīvan Press in 1903, as not worthy of being called a drama because of its ‘rural, dirty language (*grāmīṇ aślīl bhāṣā*)’ and its simple plot. While some prominent canonical figures who feature in the following chapters (not least SūDhaPā) have been the subject of many assessments, these have generally relied on their more well-known works and have not often questioned their contributions—their status as stars in the firmament of Nepali literary development has effectively rendered them immune from harsh questioning of their motivations and achievements.

Moreover, the establishment of the canon has often been dominated by what Orsini (2002: 173) elegantly describes as the ‘taxonomic urge’—analogous to Onta’s blunter critique of ‘history as a laundry list’ (1997b)—which subordinates thematic analysis to a deadeningly detailed weight of classification and categorisation by period, genre, author, etc. Thus even Indra Bahādur Rāī’s characteristically thoughtful and sophisticated analysis of the development of the Nepali novel (1974) assigns a different ‘ism’—from idealism and realism to Marxism and existentialism—to each of the dozen writers it examines.<sup>13</sup> The standard assumption that an individual’s work, or the literary production of an entire genre or period, can be reduced to small, discrete units of analysis is encouraged by the prescribed format for research dissertations and reflected in countless publications.<sup>14</sup> This devaluation of joined-up writing surely also discourages joined-up thinking: perhaps the most dangerous result of literary taxonomy is that the objective of reducing a subject to its

<sup>13</sup> This is a familiar pattern: Kṛṣṇachandrasimh Pradhān’s major study of Nepali novels and novelists ([1980/81] 1995/96) is similarly structured around ‘isms’.

<sup>14</sup> The MA thesis on Mītrasen whose table of contents is reproduced by Thāpā Magar (2000: 126-28) is typical, running to over ninety sections and subsections.

smallest constituent parts is inherently inimical to a holistic approach, the construction of a coherent framing narrative, or the drawing of valuable general conclusions. Nepali pedagogy is largely predicated on the idea that the assignation of each work, author, or fact to a named category or sub-category is the pinnacle of analytical achievement.<sup>15</sup> Even literary studies thus come to be considered as a pseudo-science; for example, Śreṣṭha's advice on the methodology of literary periodisation, complete with diagrams (2002: 41-57), looks rather like the guidelines for a laboratory experiment or a statistical survey. Can we really treat cultural and intellectual history with such Linnaean precision?

Officially encouraged love for the Nepali language has been accompanied, in particular since the Panchayat period in Nepal, by reverence for a broadly accepted literary canon.<sup>16</sup> This definitive critical hierarchy—subject to only minor variations according to individual writers—takes as its starting point the work of Bhānubhakta Āchārya, Nepali's supposed *ādikavi*, and normally progresses through a schematic periodisation (*kāl vibhājan*) to present writers in terms of eras such as the 'pre-revolutionary' (cf. Śarmā 1994/95, Śreṣṭha and Śarmā 1977; 2.1 further discusses periodisation). In this way, generations of students have been introduced to a literary tradition that is remarkably neatly tied to the development of the Nepali nation and nationalism. Indeed, while Bhānubhakta is established as the first Nepali poet of distinctive individual talent, Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Śāh's *Divya upadeś* (cf. Stiller 1968) is widely seen as the starting point of a modern Nepali prose tradition. This is not to say that the established canon has never been disputed—Gumānsīṃh Chāmlīñ (2000), for example, has launched a sustained attack on the appropriateness of the *ādikavi* title—but that it has been allowed to dominate, and has perhaps restricted the potential for alternative

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<sup>15</sup> At least this reductive approach involves some helpful ordering of information, unlike the 'scrapbook' approach to research publications, especially those produced by amateur writers. Many such works—often on local history or of a biographical nature—feature numerous appendices, assemblies of multiple block quotes, a mass of unhelpful and unsorted detail, and the indiscriminate inclusion of vast amounts of unedited primary sources (a good example of this is Nagendramaṇi Pradhān's (1991) biography of Pārasmaṇi, which I draw on in later chapters: while packed with information, its presentation is disjointed, repetitive and incoherent). One could summarise that the lack of editing in Nepali creative writing criticised by Thapa (2002) is equally evident in all too many Nepali academic works, compounded by a lack of peer review before publication.

<sup>16</sup> Love for Nepali, while without doubt genuinely experienced by many, is also partially a political construct. As Onta (1997c) observes, 'dominant national rhetoric would have us believe that Nepalis have expressed an attachment towards the Nepali language since a long time ago [but] the love expressed for the Nepali language in Nepal is of recent vintage'.

critical interpretations, or alternative criteria for evaluation. Manjushree Thapa (2002: 274) suggests that the hegemony of the historical canon is also mirrored in current hierarchies: ‘In print, few critics dare challenge writers. In fact, Nepali criticism has been hobbled by the critics’ tendency to pander to the literary who’s who, and to operate on grounds of narrow personal loyalties and political affiliations. Even the writer who welcomes criticism can face problems in seeking honest debate.’

The moral aspect of literary criticism is embedded in a rhetoric of *sāhitya sevā* whose arrival in Nepali is traced in Chapter 3 and which was allied to a broader effort to enforce a normative morality on society as a whole (3.4.2). Here there are clear parallels with the development of a critical tradition in Hindi, especially as it was shaped by Rāmchandra Śukla. As Orsini (2002: 156) notes, while writers gained authority as apparent moral leaders of society this brought with it ‘a subtle form of control, as if only a restrained, norm-abiding, and selfless individual had the moral right to be called a writer. This, indirectly, bestowed even greater authority on the critic, who became the appointed judge of a writer’s behaviour...’. In the formative period of Nepali literary criticism, which largely fell within the Panchayat years as the discipline remained in its infancy until the 1940s, the view of morally correct and socially useful literature was also tied to a rigid nationalism. Thus the influential critic Tārānāth Śarmā (1994/95: 72-73), dismissing the early novels of Sadāśiva Śarmā, bases his assessment on a typically narrow interpretation: ‘In a novel there must be national character (*rāṣṭriya charitra*) and the clear image of an era must be seen. One does not find such things in [his novels].’ The forcefully propagated role of Nepali as national language (*rāṣṭrabhāṣā*), one of the cornerstones of Panchayat ideology, could not fail to affect the evaluation of literature. Perhaps the most cogent exposition of the indivisibility of language and nation is Bālkrṣṇa Pokharel’s *Rāṣṭrabhāṣā*, which displays a straightforward interpretation of literature’s significance ([1965/66] 1993/94a: 103): ‘Literature is a nation’s lifeblood (*prāṇ*). Just as water, air and food make a person’s life healthy, so do language and literature make a nation’s life healthy. In any country there may be many languages whose importance is unequalled in their own areas, but a national language and its literature is of a different order of importance.’ Alongside dominant national perspectives, many writers have brought their own prejudices to the

study of literature without reflecting on their own location and its limitations. In this way Tārānāth Śarmā (1994/95: 49) writes unthinkingly of ‘our *sanātani* society’ without questioning how his ‘our’ might relate to the large mass of non-Hindu, or non-*sanātani* Nepalis.

A final weakness of most literary criticism is that it has failed to raise questions about the audience writers were addressing. Yet for any assessment of the public sphere which printed Indian Nepali literature was helping to define and delimit, questions about the size and nature of readerships are of great importance. Given the range of genres from which the sources for this study are drawn, it is perhaps not surprising that their readers are characterised by diversity in taste and background. Presuppositions about literary audiences and their modes of appreciation, however much they may be encouraged by the arbiters of accepted taste, are distinctly unhelpful. In relation to popular Bengali literature of the late nineteenth century Anindita Ghosh (1998: 194) reaches a conclusion which is highly relevant to publishing in other languages: ‘printed genres did not circumscribe themselves within predictable reader groups...far from displacing earlier literary conventions and tastes, and grafting onto them the sensibilities of an educated middle class, print actually helped in their survival and expansion.’ Of course, the sophisticated Bengali public sphere centred on metropolitan Calcutta differed from the sphere of a marginal language such as Nepali.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, before looking closely at a Nepali readership it is necessary to establish its very existence. Of the travails of early twentieth century publishers, Subba (1992: 230) observes that while some were due to their own lack of professionalism, they were faced with a near impossible situation. The readership was ‘virtually non-existent’ while the ‘middle class had not emerged and the bulk of their people were toiling masses with no penchant whatsoever for reading newspapers and magazines. Thus most of them met an untimely death: no amount of enthusiasm for political and literary service on behalf of the editors

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<sup>17</sup> In a South Asian context, Nepali can be described as ‘marginal’ in three senses: literally, in that it was spoken primarily in a country (Nepal) that was on the edge of South Asia and the edge of empire, and even where in use within India, many communities of its speakers were settled towards the geographical margins of the country; metaphorically, in that the majority of its speakers within India occupied socially marginal positions; linguistically, in that—withstanding early developments such as Ayton’s (1820) grammar—even Nepali’s status as an independent language remained open to question, for example by the influential Hindi grammarian Kellogg ([1876] 1938).

could free them from the shackles of economic pressures'. In fact, it is a fallacy to assume that the failure of certain publishing ventures can be attributed solely to the non-existence of an audience; equally, economic pressures were also accompanied by economic opportunities. Chapter 2 traces the emergence of a significant Nepali readership which became a lucrative market for publishing entrepreneurs, while 3.4.2 and 4.4.2 suggest that journal editors may bear much of the blame for the failure of their ventures.

The criticism of the narrow focus of Nepali historiography presented in the previous section should not be taken to mean that the socio-cultural approach adopted here is entirely novel. Indeed, we have literary history to thank for an early challenge to the dominance of political histories. Written as Sūryavikram Jñavālī's biographies of Śāh kings were starting to circulate, Brahma Śamśer's work on Bhānubhakta (1938/39, cited in Śreṣṭha 2002: 70) urges a broader view of history in terms strikingly similar to Onta's (*passim*) much later analysis. Claiming that 'an important part of Nepal's history has until now been forgotten', Śamśer incisively observes that 'as soon as one says "Nepal's history" people think of the various battles that have taken place from time to time among different families for the throne but Nepal's actual history is the story of the mixing of Aryan and Mongolian *jātis* and the development of the present Nepali *jātitva*'. Moreover, unlike so many of his successors, he recognises the fluidity of the identity-building process: 'this *jāṅyatā* is still not fully developed and day by day its development is taking place in new conditions'. To this extent, Śamśer prefigures the concerns of this thesis and demonstrates that, notwithstanding the shortcomings outlined above, Nepali literary criticism has since its inception kept open the possibility of useful alternative perspectives to those found in mainstream history.

## 1.2. The Nepali language and Its speakers

आफुलाई पहिले भारतीय अनि त्यसपछि आफ्नो छुट्टै  
चिनारीको निम्ति नेपाली वा नेपाली बोल्ने भनी  
आफ्नो परिचय हामी दिन्छौं । यो जातीयता वा छुट्टै  
विशिष्ट चिनारीको आधार हाम्रो भाषा हो । त्यसैले  
यसको सुरक्षा भए हामी सुरक्षित हुने छौं ।

*We introduce ourselves first as Indian and  
then for our own separate identity as  
Nepali or Nepali-speaking. The basis of  
this jāti-hood, or separate, special identity,  
is our language. Therefore if it is secure,  
we shall be secure.*

(Kumār Pradhān 1993: 76)

### 1.2.1. Language

Influences from various cultural spheres shaped the development of Nepali writing and, more widely, public discourse. The following paragraphs sketch the principal features of these influences and identify some important questions raised by the interaction of these spheres. First, however, it is essential to address the position of language itself.<sup>18</sup> The role of language in the formation of the Indian Nepali community can hardly be overestimated. Timsina (1992), for example, echoes many Nepali writers—of Nepal and especially of India—in his assertion that language is the sole defining feature of Nepali ethnicity or group identity.<sup>19</sup> Its significance can be understood in two broad categories: functional and symbolic. The functional importance of the Nepali language lay initially in its operation as a *lingua franca* that enabled various groups of otherwise heterogeneous linguistic heritage to communicate, live and work together.<sup>20</sup> Even at the earliest stage of such usage in India, however, Nepali was gaining a symbolic role because its inclusion of certain groups within a linguistic boundary also started to mark a wider community identity. Functional issues arising from the promotion of a particular language, or its recognition at some level of governmental authority, include the foundation of related literary and cultural associations

<sup>18</sup> On the origins and development of the Nepali language, Srivastava (1962) offers the only study in English along the lines of Suniti Kumar Chatterji's influential historical study of Bengali ([1926] 1970) but it is undermined by his poor knowledge of the language and a bizarre selection of literary sources. Bandhu's *Nepālī bhāṣāko utpatti* ([1968/69] 1995/96) remains the best introduction; Nepāl's more recent study (1996/97), while promisingly titled, is an unscientific polemic best avoided. Pokharel (1982/83) usefully brings together a wide range of articles on linguistic research in Nepali, and his collection of samples of Nepali from the last 500 years (1993/94b) is valuable.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Nepalis are a group of people who share a common language and that is Nepali' (1992: 13; see also p. 17).

<sup>20</sup> This is, of course, in addition to the particular roles of the Nepali language within communities of ancestral Nepali-speakers.

and the possibility of improved employment prospects. Donald Horowitz (extracted in Hutchinson and Smith: 289-90) has observed that beyond practical career-related issues, language can have an 'ethnic cohesion-building capacity' as a symbol that transcends subethnic differences. He sees language as 'a potent symbolic issue because it accomplishes a double linkage. It links political claims to ownership with psychological demands for the affirmation of group worth, and it ties this aggregate matter of group status to outright careerism, thereby binding elite material interests to mass concerns.' Some writers, such as Robert Bartlett (*ibid.*: 130) trace the associated ethnicity-building capacity of language to well before the modern period and industrial print-capitalist influences: 'The sense of belonging to a language community could become the basis, not simply for a feeling of belonging or fellowship, but also for political claims.' The major growth and alteration in the functional significance of Nepali that took place with the development of printing, publishing and education in India forms one focus of this thesis.

Language has also played a significant symbolic role in building social coherence in the Nepali community. Symbolic factors can be seen at work alongside but distinct from functional achievements such as an expansion in the total number of Nepali-speakers. Later, for example, the establishment of the mid-nineteenth century Nepali poet Bhānubhakta Āchārya as a symbol of Nepali cultural unity performed several functions: it reinforced the argument that Nepali was a language with a literary history and distinct identity worthy of respect; it provided a physical focus for a language-based interpretation of identity in the form of statues; it provided the opportunity for a new ritual celebration of language, history and a sense of shared community through annual programmes organised in many locations (though again modelled on Darjeeling's initiative) to celebrate Bhānu Jayantī, the poet's birth anniversary. These developments took place mainly after the period covered by the thesis but the groundwork was laid by efforts such as the NSS's republication of Motīrām Bhaṭṭa's biography of Bhānubhakta and in 1940, its *Bhānubhakta smārak grantha* (memorial volume), which included a wide range of critical essays and established the *ādikavi* title. Both volumes were edited by Sūryavikram.

Nepali literature emerged from a background of pre-existing folk cultures and influential literatures in other languages.<sup>21</sup> Popular culture of various ethnic groups within Nepal encompassed a range of song styles, the structure and content of which would shape early literary endeavours in Nepali. Meanwhile the tradition of *vaṃśāvalīs*, accounts of the genealogies and deeds of royal lineages—ranging from the factual to the fictional—provided a basis for local understandings of historical narrative. Yet the most weighty factors bearing on the young literature remained traditions developed in other languages. Some of these were indigenous to Nepal and others exerted their influence from neighbouring linguistic-cultural spheres. Foremost among these stood Sanskrit, whose imprimatur reflected not only its status as the primary classical language of South Asia but also its role as a vehicle for Hindu religious and philosophical tradition. While secular writing in Sanskrit existed and could transmit certain stylistic peculiarities (the nature descriptions of *bāhramāse* poetry, say, or verse formats such as *mahākāvya* and *khaṇḍakāvya*) its cultural dominance was rooted in the social and political system. As literacy was largely restricted to Brāhmaṇs—whose training could extend to the intellectual rigours of grammatical or *vedānta* analysis or be restricted to gaining a working knowledge of the major *karma-kāṇḍa* ritual texts that enabled them to officiate as *purohīts*—it is not surprising that they stood to claim the rewards of this historical monopoly by dominating writing and publishing in the vernacular.

While the story of this thesis is partly the story of the breaking of this monopoly and the diversification of cultural influences, the power of the Sanskrit world in shaping channels for literary creativity in Nepali should not be underestimated. The Nepali publishing scene in Banaras was dominated by Brāhmaṇs, as writers, publishers and distributors, and while new formats for a new readership were explored and elaborated this class of cultural pioneers drew deeply on well-established tradition. However, there were other languages

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<sup>21</sup> Folk traditions have often been neglected by literary historians, except when they have directly influenced written styles. Śarmā's influential history (1994/95), for example, gives no space to folk traditions (Pradhan (1984) is an honourable exception). The influence of popular song is acknowledged when its rhythms, most prominently *jhyāure* metre, enter mainstream poetry. Bandhu's recent (2001/02b) survey of Nepali folk literature is comprehensive, illuminating and accessible: it may bring the study of folk traditions to a wider audience, while its useful bibliography indicates that much research has taken place on various practices and genres.

which had long impinged upon Nepali-speakers and which dominated parts of Nepal itself. In particular, the written traditions of Newari and Maithili had had a reputation beyond their own heartlands for centuries. Both of these languages—despite Newari’s Tibeto-Burman family affiliation—drew heavily on Sanskrit for vocabulary, subject matter, styles and genres. Newari literature had probably already declined from its zenith by the time that Newar kings ceded the Kathmandu valley to Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ and his less urbane fighters from Gorkha. Yet its achievements, along with other Newar cultural institutions such as musical and *bhajan*-performing *guthis*, meant that any future literary developments in Nepal would not take place on a blank slate but rather be additions to a cultural tapestry which had already been intricately patterned. Similarly, the pre-Gorkha Kathmandu rulers had themselves been impressed by the accomplishments and sophistication of Maithili, to the extent that it too gained a degree of status and circulation within the royal courts.<sup>22</sup>

The Nepali public sphere was not immune from wider developments in South Asia and their cultural consequences. Just as modern north Indian languages were provided a common basis by Sanskrit (see glossary entry for Indo-Aryan), so were they marked by the imprint of political changes which assigned or removed prestige from different forms of speech and writing. Thus the delay in recognising Nepali as the official state language of Nepal despite its long-standing popular currency must owe something to the courtly position of Farsi—under the Mughals and the British—as the most polished language of administration. As Farsi was displaced by English in terms of official usage and perceived status, so were vernaculars exposed to new patterns of external influence. If the complex traditions of Farsi metaphor and wordplay were ultimately channelled into the Urdu *ghazal*, languages such as Bengali, Hindi and Nepali found a new impetus towards production in formats—such as the short story and novel—imported from English. In a few short decades overlapping the period of this study, Hindi moved from traditional *bhakti* and *śṛṅgār* poetry to the radical modernism of Chhāyāvādī poetry.<sup>23</sup> The first ten to fifteen years of the

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<sup>22</sup> For background details on Newari language and literature see Malla (1981) and Kansakar (1981); on Maithili, Mishra (1949, 1950) and Yadav (1981).

<sup>23</sup> This was not a chronologically straightforward transition as older and newer literary modes co-existed and were often produced and consumed by the same people. The preface of Sumitrānandan Pant’s *Pallav* (1926) was a manifesto for Chhāyāvād; Premchand’s *Sevā-sadan* (1919), *Premāśram* (1921), *Nirmalā* (1927) were particularly influential in the development of the modern, social-themed

twentieth century also witnessed the eclipsing of Urdu and other Islamic-heritage languages by Hindi and Hindu-heritage languages (cf. King 1994: 37, 40). Bengali, meanwhile, had reinvented itself from the language of itinerant Baul singers to a modern medium which led South Asian experiments in the novel as well as giving the world its first Asian Nobel laureate in the form of Rabindranath Tagore. Significantly, both of these great leaps forward depended on the redefinition—perhaps even the recreation—of the languages concerned. Hindi saw a transition from the aged regional standards of Brajbhāṣā and Avadhī to new norm of *khadī bolī* while Bengali gradually abandoned its mediaeval-origin *sādhu bhāṣā* for a thoroughly revised *chalit bhāṣā*.

These were not chance developments, and the social and political conditioning of these shifts is relevant to this study of Nepali and its associated sphere. Significantly, the adoption of *khadī bolī* and *chalit bhāṣā* represented in each case a geographical and a class change, the shedding of old linguistic skins reflecting wider renegotiations of political and cultural power. While Brajbhāṣā was tied geographically and emotionally to Kṛṣṇa's Vrindavan and Mathura, and Avadhī to the Banaras of Tulsī Dās, *khadī bolī* looked more to the revived centre of temporal power of Delhi and the concept of a Hindi-speaking nation. Equally, *sādhu bhāṣā* Bengali, based on the dialects of central and eastern Bengal, gave way to a variety far less representative of the majority of its speakers, *chalit bhāṣā* emerging specifically from the speech of the Calcutta middle classes.<sup>24</sup> Thus both of the new standards for north India's most important vernaculars resulted from processes which realigned languages with new axes of power, exemplified by the overlapping categories of officialdom and the formally educated classes. Amidst such radical developments in adjacent areas, it is impossible to understand the role and status of Nepali solely with reference to the internal dynamics of Nepal or the Indian Nepali population. The most

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novel; Rāmchandra Śukla's *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās* (1940) provided a dominant model for literary history; Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī's *Hindī kī pahilī pustak* (1911) similarly offered a new template for language education which would influence Nepali primers. Apart from Orsini (2002), see McGregor (1974) and Gaeffke (1978) on the development of Hindi literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

<sup>24</sup> For some interesting observations on *chalit bhāṣā*'s 'new written prose' of the post-Bāṅkimchandra late nineteenth century—'distinct not so much as a 'development' of earlier narrative forms but fundamentally by virtue of its adoption of a wholly different, i.e. modern European, discursive framework'—and the relation of the new standard to other varieties see Chatterjee (1992: 42-45).

influential actors in the promotion of the Nepali language and the development of its literature were almost without exception unusually exposed to events in other cultural zones. An entry from the diary of Rāmamaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit (7 October 1914, cited in Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1999/2000a: 146)), founder of Nepal's Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti, illustrates the inspiration derived from India for innovations within Nepal. Writing of Vaijanāth Sedhāim, who established the pioneering publishing-cum-retailing Gorkha Agency in Kathmandu, he observed that 'as this *paṇḍit* has just spent one-and-a-half years in India his "spirit" has greatly increased and he is doing many things ...'. Even ten years after the establishment of the Darjeeling Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, the speech of one of its key proponents, Hariprasād Pradhān (1935: 71), at an annual meeting demonstrated that Nepali still had to position itself in relation to Hindi: 'just as a house lacking firm foundations will surely one day collapse however much support it receives from outside, so is the Hindi language only an external support for our house, and we must strengthen the foundations of the house that is our mother tongue and *jāti*'.

As Chapter 2 demonstrates, Banaras, with its heady mix of Hindu tradition and the intellectual life of Nepalis in exile, was the furnace in which the modern Nepali print literary system was forged. Writers here were generally familiar with Sanskrit and Hindi and were willing to draw on them freely. Indeed, they operated in a milieu where Hindi litterateurs had been experimenting with new forms and, particularly from the 1870s onwards, with translations and adaptations from Bengali novels, a practice so frequent that 'eighteenth-century Bengal ... became one of the usual backdrops to heroic narratives' (Orsini 2002: 211). The influence of such borrowing can be traced directly in Nepali: thus Rāmeśchandra Datta's *Baṅga vijetā* (1874), serialised in Hindi in 1879 and published in 1886, eventually reached a Nepali audience through a serialised translation (possibly from the Hindi rather than the original) in the Banaras-based journal *Chandra* (Datta 1914).<sup>25</sup> From further afield, Nepali writers also adapted stories and themes into Nepali from Farsi,

<sup>25</sup> Apart from this serialisation, started in its first issue, *Chandra* incorporated other Bengali and Hindi influences. Its second issue carried a portrait of 'Bengal's renowned *kavi siromaṇi* Rabindranath Tagore' (Lekhnāth Paudyāl would later be known as Nepali's own *kavi siromaṇi* or 'poet laureate'), while a poem ('Svargīya saṅgīt' signed 'Dīpak, Nepal', pp. 17-18) was a translation of Maithilī Śaraṇ Gupta's original in *Sarasvatī*. Among later examples of translations is Vaijanāth Sedhāim's 'Hemantaṛtu varṇan', a dense rendering of an article from *Chandroday*.

Urdu and English. From the relatively thin production of novels which fall into Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī's (1993/94) 'intermediate' period, a large proportion are Nepali renditions of originals from other languages.<sup>26</sup>

Early Nepali publishing efforts were thus informed by precedents in other languages. For example, the pioneering Hindi journals such as *Sarasvatī* and *Mādhurī* were clear figureheads among literary periodicals and provided models for Nepali adaptation. Overlapping influence can also be seen in linguistic innovation, in terms of progress towards language standardisation and the definition and refinement of a literary register. Here, for example, the campaign for grammatical and orthographic standardisation in Nepali waged by Pārasmaṇi (5.2.2) may have been directly influenced by that of Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī for Hindi: Dvivedī was among the 'inspirational figures of national pride' whom Pārasmaṇi chose to celebrate and promote in Nepali (Pradhān 1991: 409) and his attempts to confine acceptable modern Hindi literature to socially useful or moralistic output are echoed in the world of Nepali letters (3.4.2, 4.4.2). Meanwhile, the institutions of Bengali and Hindi literature and learning provided clear inspiration for early Nepali associations: it was through his active involvement in Darjeeling High School's Hindī Sāhitya Samāḷ (which ran a library and organised literary gatherings) that Pārasmaṇi realised the need for a Nepali equivalent and set up the rival Gorkhā Sāhitya Samāḷ (Pradhan 1997: 9-10). Similarly, the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelaṇ could look to the inspirational example of Hindi's much more powerful Nāgarī Prachāriṇī Sabhā (4.3). The representation of interaction between literary-cultural spheres has perhaps been underplayed by Nepali literary histories. For example, Motīrām Bhaṭṭa's open and active involvement with Hariśchandra is hardly reflected in more recent rejection of Hindi influence in Nepali (cf. Hutt 1988: 58-60). In fact, the flow of forms, inspiration and ideas between different cultural spheres cannot be simply categorised. Borrowings from other

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<sup>26</sup> He lists 66 such works (including nine which appeared in periodicals rather than as separate publications), of which the largest number are versions of Hindi originals, followed by Bengali and English in joint second place. Of the books, only four were published within Nepal while at least 36 were published in Banaras. All of the Arabic/Farsi/Urdu-origin, and all but one of the Hindi-origin books came out from Banaras, while Darjeeling was responsible for the majority of the English-sourced novels.

spheres represented an active appropriation and modification process as much as a passive reception of influence.

Looking towards language as a key marker of identity raises interesting questions about group dynamics. Ancestral Nepali speakers (i.e. Brāhmaṇs, Chhetrīs and certain occupational castes) formed only a small proportion of Nepali settlers in India while the vast majority were from Tibeto-Burman language-speaking hill groups. Despite the emphasis on defining and promoting a Nepali or Gorkha identity distinct from other Indian identities, the seemingly separatist agendas of individual and institutional actors in Indian Nepali communities appear to have effected a dramatically successful ‘Sanskritization’ process. The predominantly Tibeto-Burman language-speaking proto-Nepali communities in India managed, early in this century and to an extent that has still not been equalled within Nepal itself, to identify themselves with an Indo-Aryan language.

### *1.2.2. Nepali communities in India: a brief introduction*

Until relatively recently neither India nor Nepal existed in their present form, and boundaries of political authority often overlapped the current national frontiers. Similarly, spheres of cultural and spiritual influence were rarely co-extensive with realms of temporal power. Hill Nepalis have historically had two major links to the plains of north India. The first was trans-Himalayan trade, from the Tibetan plateau to the Gangetic plains. The second was somewhat more abstract: a combination of religious, cultural and educational ties to traditional centres of learning. Following the demise of Buddhism in north India such ties were the particular (albeit not exclusive) preserve of Brāhmaṇs, and the major spiritual locus was Banaras. Meanwhile the emotional heart of the present day Indian Nepali community—and the site of much of the important work of cultural organisation and production in the formative period of the public sphere—is the eastern Himalaya, particularly the Darjeeling area, and latterly Sikkim.

Details of the pattern of Nepali settlement in India are presented in Appendix 1; here we may note some significant distinctive features of Indian Nepali society. The most notable feature is the different caste and ethnic composition of Nepali communities in the various places where they were concentrated. In none of these areas did the make-up of the Nepali population reflect the overall balance obtaining within Nepal, yet each location also

differed from others. Banaras was dominated by Brāhmaṇs, the wilder fringes of Assam (areas such as Nagaland and Meghalaya which have—in 1963 and 1972 respectively—become separate states within India) settled by the originally Tibeto-Burman language-speaking descendants of Nepalis serving in the army and police, the Brahmaputra valley predominantly by Bāhun-Chhetrī graziers, and Darjeeling by a cross-section of Nepalis, but one in which ancestral Nepali-speakers were seriously under-represented compared to their share of the population in Nepal (*Table 1-1*).<sup>27</sup>

Community	Population	% total population
Nepalese	137,450	55.2
Khambu [Rai]	33,000	13.2
Murmi [Tamang]	25,400	10.2
Limbu	14,300	5.7
Chettri	11,600	4.7
Mangar	11,900	4.8
Kami	9,800	3.9
Gurung	8,700	3.5
Newar	5,880	2.4
Brahman	ca. 5,000	2.0
Damai	4,600	1.8
Gharti	3,450	1.4
Sherpa	3,450	1.4
Sarki	1,800	0.7
Yakha	1,143	0.5
Lepcha	ca. 10,000	4.0
Bhutia	5,850	2.3
Total	ca. 153,300	62.6

*Table 1-1* Nepali, Lepcha, and Bhutia population of Darjeeling 1901, adapted from figures in O'Malley (1907: 41-46).<sup>28</sup> Under 'language', 19 'dialects' were recorded; nearly 20% returned 'Khas' or 'Nepali Hindi' (*ibid.*: 48).

<sup>27</sup> Hutt (1997a: 114) summarises that between 1901 and 1951 the population belonging to various identifiable Nepali *jāts* doubled but the proportion of castes and ethnic groups changed little: roughly  $\frac{1}{7}$  Rai;  $\frac{1}{9}$  Tamang, and Brāhmaṇs only 2.5%. Ancestral Nepali-speakers (i.e. Brāhmaṇ, Chhetrī, Kami, Sarki, Damai) formed around 20% of the Darjeeling Nepali community in 1951. According to the 1961 Census of West Bengal, 59% in Darjeeling claimed Nepali as their mother tongue.

<sup>28</sup> O'Malley did not count Sherpas as 'Nepalese' but as a subclass of Bhutias ('Sharpā Bhotiās'), even while acknowledging that they 'come from the east of Nepāl' (*ibid.*: 45).

In terms of religion, census figures demonstrate that by 1901 Hinduism was clearly dominant in Darjeeling, although one must assume a tendency to assign respondents to one of the major religious categories. This must account for the large number of Buddhists (only 700 less than the entire total of the Bhutia, Sherpa, Tamang and Lepcha populations) and the small number of animists (Table 1-2).

Religion	Number	% total population
Hinduism	187,000	75.1
Buddhism	44,000	17.7
Islam	<9,965	<4
Animism	3,438	1.4
Christianity	4,467	1.8

Table 1-2 Religion in Darjeeling, 1901, adapted from figures in O'Malley (1907: 48).

The role of language also demonstrates some important differences between the Nepalese and Indian Nepali communities. The heterogeneous Indian Nepali population described above accepted the Nepali language as both a *lingua franca* and also a powerful cultural symbol from an earlier period than most Nepalese Nepalis. For this there was a variety of reasons: the practical requirements of convenient communication among people of diverse linguistic backgrounds, a remarkable willingness to abandon one's historical mother tongue in favour of a language which was rapidly gaining educational and cultural prestige, and a growing sense of the value of the Nepali language as a rallying point for a small and fragmented community which otherwise might face oblivion in the vastness of India.

Furthermore, the promotion of the Nepali language took place alongside deeper social changes within Indian Nepali communities, including a relaxation in the observation of caste rules and an apparent growth in intermarriage between people of different ethnic origin.<sup>29</sup> This parallel process of cultural and social integration is also observed by Hutt

<sup>29</sup> These developments cannot be quantified during the period under examination here for want of relevant data. Even now there is a distinct shortage of research in these areas and it would be unwise to draw wide conclusions from very limited data. However, some information on Darjeeling district is provided by Subba (1989: 57-64), who observes various developments in the Nepali caste system in the villages he studied, among them the loss of the Newar caste hierarchy, the simplification of the

(1998: 194): 'Despite the diversity of their ancestors' origins, post-migration generations [of Indian Nepalis] have attained a high degree of cultural uniformity outside Nepal, as well as a somewhat higher degree of equality between castes and ethnic groups than that which obtains in Nepal.' The apparent trend towards greater intra-Nepali equality had probably been spurred by the migration process, which deprived the upper castes of many traditional supports including the agrarian class base: this is the argument that leads Subba (1989: 72) to conclude that overall 'the caste relations in the [Darjeeling] region have become much more egalitarian.' However, he notes (*ibid.*: 133) that economic success seems to be related to the order of migration: for example, high caste Hindu migrants who include a larger proportion of later settlers have 'a higher percentage of people in the lower rungs of agrarian hierarchy'. This is a process where other cultural factors have probably played a role: the new dynamic introduced by formal education, for example, opened up avenues of social mobility. Thus the first Nepali graduates in India were not just Brāhmaṇs, but included Gurungs and Newars. Again, the simple fact that Nepalis formed a small and vulnerable community within an Indian polity dominated by others may have encouraged an enhanced sense of solidarity and hence a willingness to downgrade the significance of caste and ethnic barriers within the Nepali community.

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overall hierarchy and the apparent erosion of rules governing commensality. Marital rules appear to be more strictly observed but Subba notes a correspondence between the level of 'urbanization' of a village and the proportion of intercaste marriages. In Rangbull, the most developed of the villages he studied, 32 per cent of marriages were intercaste (*ibid.*: 69).

### 1.3. Sources and organisation of the study

वर्तमान छरपस्ट छ । भविष्य त्यो सधैको अजन्मा । सोध्न जाऊँ कि बिगतलाई ? विगत बसिरहेको होला कही ? उहिल्यै बितिसकेको होइन त्यो ? होइन, कसैले मर्न नपाएको विरल मृत्यु मदर्तिहेछ विगत । मरिसकेको अनेक पछि पनि बाँचिरहेकै हुँदो रहेछ विगत । खोज्नसकौला, सोध्नसकौला हाम्रो वर्तमान, हाम्रो भविष्यको आकलन यही सधै 'छ-सँग । ... ऐलेलाई, जीवित त्यो विगतसँग सम्बन्ध स्थापनाको सहजप्राप्य माध्यम अर्कै कुनै हेर्नु छ । भाग्यवश, त्यो माध्यम प्राप्त छ हामीलाई: पूर्वकालदेखिका पुस्तकहरूमा । पुस्तकहरू अभिलेखहरूनै हुन्छन् जुन । पुस्तसँग जे पनि, जति पनि, जैले पनि सोध्नसकिन्छ ।

*The present is hard to grasp. The future always unborn. Should I go and enquire of the past? Might the past be sitting around somewhere? Hasn't it already been and gone? No, it's dying a different death, a death no one has been able to die. Long after dying it still turns out to be surviving, the past. We could search, we could ask for an estimation of our present, our future, with this forever 'is' ... For now, we must look for some other attainable medium to establish a link with that living past. Fortunately, we have such a medium: books from previous ages. Books which are archives indeed. With books one can ask whatever, however much, whenever.*

(Indra Bahādur Rāi 1994: 1-2)

While Sūryavikram Jñavālī was resident in Banaras in the 1910s, he had heard of the rumoured existence of an edition of Raghunāth Pokharel's *Rāmāyaṇa sundar kāṇḍa* published in the 1890s. Although many people agreed on its significance it was impossible for him to track down a copy. Some years later, on winter vacation from his teaching job in Darjeeling, he visited Banaras and dropped by at the house of Rādherām, a trader in books and other goods. It was by chance that Sūryavikram spotted Raghunāth's *Sundar kāṇḍa* lying on a rubbish heap in the courtyard and rescued it with the aim of producing a new edition (Jñavālī 1998: 20-21). Sadly, this tale is not a historical curiosity but an indication of the neglect with which many Nepali publications have been treated and continue to be treated. Disregard for the physical integrity of printed materials sometimes reflects disdain for their contents. In the case of the much-maligned Gaṅgāprasād, Rāmkr̥ṣṇa Śarmā—described by Prasāi (2000/01: 95) as the Śaṅkarāchārya of Nepali literary criticism—confesses to having accidentally thrown away the sole copy of the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat* in his possession along with other old papers (1983: 25). Meanwhile, the only other copy of this issue of the historic newspaper, in the private collection of Nagendramaṇi Pradhān, has been crudely butchered with scissors to make the block print which appears in Pradhān (1991: 63). Thankfully, such acts of gratuitous vandalism are not typical. The carelessness towards preservation of the printed word that they hint at is, however, widespread and debilitating for the study of Nepali writings. A recent article on the legacy of Lakṣmīprasād

Devkoṭā (Kharel 2003), Nepal's generally acknowledged *mahākavi*, reveals a shocking state of affairs: although Devkoṭā's works date only from the 1940s and 1950s, although he has been instituted as the central figure of the modern Nepali canon (in whom Rubin (1980: 5) sees 'the entire Romantic era of Nepali literature'), although he has been subject to the most intense biographical and critical research of any Nepali writer (Bandhu's seminal literary biography (2001/02a) is now in its third edition), even the Royal Nepal Academy's library has managed to collect less than a third of his published books. The Tribhuvan University library has less than half, the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya also lacks many, and Kharel found at least six books entirely untraceable. This is not to mention the loss of various unpublished manuscripts left with the erstwhile Nepālī Bhāṣānuvād Pariṣad or supposed to be with his family.<sup>30</sup>

Given this background, the fact that collecting the materials needed for this study was not straightforward may not seem too surprising. This is partly my fault: I have often deliberately sought to search for work that has been excluded from literary histories, and this search has necessarily been hampered by a metaphorical blindfold. With minimal guidance from secondary sources and no recourse to fully catalogued archives—let alone the luxuries of microfilm collections except in the case of the *Gorkhāpatra*—the process of collating the range of source materials drawn on in this study has been frequently disappointing but also occasionally serendipitous. Moreover, there have been some pointers along the way. The *madhyakālīn* ('intermediate') era of literature—the generally accepted designation for the period within which these materials fall (see fn. 38)—has been passed over briefly by most critics keen to get their teeth into the challenging works of more modern authors. However, there have been notable efforts to save a whole category of literary production from eternal neglect by three scholars in particular: Kamal Dīkṣit, Śaradchandra Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī and Ghaṭarāj Bhaṭṭarāī.<sup>31</sup> To their various contributions—

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<sup>30</sup> In an intriguing follow-up article by Śrīś Bhaṅḍārī (2003), Devkoṭā's son Padam confirmed that while some manuscripts have been lost, he is in possession of various others but refuses to disclose details of them. This article also provides a summary of many 'lost manuscripts' of the leading names in modern Nepali literature, which only reinforces the sorry picture painted above.

<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, despite the large quantity of detailed research by these scholars, there has been little effort to complement the assembly of facts with an analysis of their significance, even in Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī's *Mādhyamik nepālī gadyākhyān* (1993/94), the most comprehensive account by any writer on the period.

often in the form of brief essays or articles—I owe many of the details about early writers and publishers in Banaras which could not be gleaned from their own publications. But not for nothing is Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī's valuable collection of biographical essays entitled *Ojhelmā parekāharū* ('Those who have fallen into obscurity', 1999/2000a): despite his dedication and encyclopaedic knowledge of this period—before his untimely death last year more than one colleague told me that 'he even lives and thinks *madhyakālīn*'—even he has to admit defeat on many points of fact or detail. And many of the writers examined in the following chapters do not even make it into this collection.

Ghaṭarāj Bhaṭṭarāī has recently produced a useful biographical dictionary of Nepali writers (*Nepālī lekhak koś*, 1999/2000), which aims to include all writers who have published at least one book in Nepal or made other important contributions to literature. Yet Ratan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (whose *Premlaharī*, first published in 1909, was one of the outstanding commercial successes of early Banaras Nepali publishing (2.3.1) and who also wrote moral and educational literature) or Siddhi Bahādur Basnyāt (whose verse on the Tibet war ran to well over a dozen editions, its third edition having appeared by 1896 (2.3.3), and who also wrote at least one other book) do not merit a mention among the more than two thousand entries. Similarly overlooked are more than a dozen authors of books referred to in this thesis, not to mention many who made significant contributions to journals or the stage.<sup>32</sup> Given that this is by far the most comprehensive attempt of its kind, the level of ignorance of these writers and their works among readers of standard literary histories can be surmised. This despite the fact that the total literary output of Nepali remains modest: in his introduction Bhaṭṭarāī estimates there may be a total of five thousand published Nepali writers to date, whereas for Hīndī Śyāmbihārī and Śukdevbihārī Miśra had already published in 1913 their 'voluminous compilation of about five thousand Hīndī writers and works' (Orsini 2002: 408).

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<sup>32</sup> Obvious omissions among authors of books include Durgādevī Āchārya Dīkṣit, Dhanvīr Bhaṇḍārī, Jaṅgabīr, Mahāvīr Siṃh Garataulā Kṣatrī, Pratimān Siṃh Lāmā, Mītrasen, Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān, Dākṃān Rāī, Prasād Siṃh Rāī, Śersīṃh Rānā, Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā, Hariprasād Śarmā, Vaijanāth Sedhāīṃ, Amarsīṃh Thāpā. Even where writers are included, the presentation may be incomplete (thus the entry on Śeṣ Maṇi does not mention his editorship of *Nebulā* or his essays in *Chandrikā* but only speaks of him as a writer of children's textbooks) or inaccurate (thus Homnāth's well-known *Rāmāśvamedha*, which dates to at least 1895 (*SP*), has been listed as 1903/04).

Vernacular sources have played a sadly limited role in much historical writing on South Asia but they offer a great opportunity to enrich our understanding. As Onta persuasively argues (1996c: 216-21), Nepali historiography has been dominated by the political with little attention paid to social and cultural themes. While numerous studies in English and Nepali have now thrown light on large swathes of British and Nepalese official records, there has been little attempt to analyse writings beyond those of direct relevance either to political power relations at the centre or to diplomatic relations. Several factors have contributed to the neglect of vernacular written sources: in Nepal, the disciplinary dominance of social anthropology, with its 'anti-scriptural' traditions,<sup>33</sup> the assumption that the limited circumstances of literary production preclude the possibility of it offering wider insights; the type of misreading or non-reading of *Orientalism* which concludes that textual studies are inherently tainted, obsolete, or imperialist; more recently, the growth of interest in postcolonial approaches with their concomitant focus on the metropolitan and general distaste for vernacular writing;<sup>34</sup> finally, the simple unwillingness of foreign scholars to commit themselves to language-learning, a tendency that has also infected English-language scholarship by Nepalis with a notable disdain for reference to local-language sources. It is one of the aims of this thesis to demonstrate the potential of such writings to shed light on an important historical period and process. Nevertheless, Nepali literary production was significantly limited in comparison to that of other languages. Alongside the distinct lack of overarching master narratives of Nepaliness, for most of this period the twin archetypal forms of Anderson's community imaginings—the novel and the newspaper—were also effectively absent, while Nepali's first collection of short stories, the NSS's *Kathā-kusum*, was only published at the end of this period, in 1938. The sources we are left with,

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<sup>33</sup> As Ernest Gellner (1993) succinctly expressed it, 'anthropologists are the anti-scripturalists of the social sciences. Obviously they are not given to the idea, tempting to at least some historians or orientalist and classicists, that there is no reality without some document or text'. The question of the role of anthropology, and its relation to historical studies of Nepali social formations, is returned to in the Conclusion.

<sup>34</sup> Such postcolonial prejudice was most famously—or notoriously—exemplified by Salman Rushdie (1997) when he concluded that post-1947 prose writing by Indian authors working in English 'is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 "official languages" of India during the same time; and, indeed, this new, and still burgeoning, 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books.'

however, from poetry and periodicals to popular narratives and institutional records, are a rich and revealing archive of social consciousness. Moreover, they are the tip of an iceberg: they are all that remain to indicate the form of debates that took place in many other settings, in face-to-face interactions, in institutional committee meetings, or at countless unrecorded public gatherings.

To summarise, the majority of the materials examined in this thesis have been passed over by previous studies, their writers themselves written out of history. Their value is embodied in the analysis presented in the following chapters; it need not be argued for separately here. More useful would be a brief survey of their origins. This thesis traces the creation of a community of letters that embraced Nepalis across India as well as within Nepal's borders. However, the publications examined predominantly originate in Banaras or Darjeeling (although this was frequently not the case of authors and contributors themselves). There are significant exceptions—for example, journals such as the *Gorkhāpatra* from Kathmandu and *Gorkhā Saṃsār* and *Taruṅ Gorkhā* from Dehradun—but publishing within Nepal was severely restricted by government censorship and lack of infrastructure, while contributions to print culture from the farther fringes of the diaspora increased more slowly. The journals referred to date from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards.<sup>35</sup> *Chandra* and *Chandrikā* form the major focus of Chapter 3, for reasons explained in 3.1; this section also sketches the role of other journals in building the public sphere.<sup>36</sup> The bibliography also provides basic information on each journal at a glance. Here

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<sup>35</sup> It is generally acknowledged in Nepali literary histories that the first Nepali language periodical was the *Gorkhā Bhārat Jīvan*, edited by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa and published by Bābu Rāmkr̥ṣṇa Varmā's Bhārat Jīvan Press in Banaras. However, no copy of this journal has survived and there is little evidence to prove that it was published or—assuming that it was—to gauge its language and contents. Sūryavikram Jīnavālī, editor of Motīrām's biography of Bhānubhakta, asserted without qualification (Bhaṭṭa 1927: 1) that Varmā was persuaded by Motīrām to publish a Nepali edition of his long-lived Hindi *Bhārat Jīvan* journal for 'one or two years'. The oldest Indian Nepali journal of which copies are extant is the *Gorkhā Khabar Kāgat*, which started publication in 1901 (3.1). In Kathmandu, Motīrām had formed the Motī-Kṛṣṇa-Dhīrendra Company, whose Paśupat Press reportedly brought out the journal *Sudhāsāgar* in 1898-99, but once again no conclusive evidence has remained of this (Dīkṣit 1979/80: 9). The final word should go to the leading expert Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1999/2000a: 193), who claims that proof of *Gorkhā Bhārat Jīvan*'s publication is conclusive but that it was in any case predated by Ḍamaruvallabh Pokharel's weekly *Gorkhā Samchārpātra* in 1887/88 (cf. Appendix 3 entry on Viśvarāj and Harihar Śarmā).

<sup>36</sup> The history of Nepali journals and newspapers in India has been dealt with in varying degrees of detail by Dīkṣit (1979/80), Devkoṭā (1967; although his focus is on Nepal), Sundās (1976), Pradhān

we may note certain prominent similarities and differences between these periodicals. All journals faced a struggle to support themselves financially and to establish a wide base of subscribers: even Nepal's government-backed *Gorkhāpatra* had to make frequent appeals to its readers for support. Regular haranguing of readers became part of editors' standard repertoire (3.4.2). Most journals were short-lived, although lack of readers or apathy among their potential audience was not the sole cause for failure. Only the *Gorkhāpatra* and Darjeeling's *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat* (supported by a committed editor and serving the practical and proselytising requirements of the church) could claim longevity as an achievement. Similarly, all journals devoted at least some space to similar topics, most significantly to discussions of education, social reform and progress. All, as was the case with many books, turned to advertising to offset the costs of publication. Apart from periodicals, this study makes use of a variety of Nepali books. For example, the assessment of the Banaras publishing scene presented in Chapter 2 draws on religious and astrological texts, volumes of popular verse, fiction and historical writing, and even basic guides to the Nepali alphabet for neo-literates and guides to English for Nepali-speakers.

The structure of this thesis is simple, and each chapter largely speaks for itself; here I present only the briefest summary of the argument's outline. Chapter 2 proposes that the early twentieth century saw the emergence in India, primarily Banaras, of a form of Nepali print-capitalism which was founded on popular publishing. This chapter examines the origins and form of the commercial print business as well as surveying its output and considering the roles of publishers and the readership. It suggests that we need to view the literary system as a whole, including large amounts of writings excluded from literary histories, in order to understand how popular publishing laid the foundations for public discourse. Chapter 3 opens with an analysis of the role of journals as a bridge between mass-market books and a form of rational-critical discursive sphere. Its central sections dissect in detail the way in which journals were used to develop a rhetoric of social progress, tied especially to the concepts of learning, *unnati* and Nepali as the 'mother tongue'. It suggests that the motivations behind such discourse and its complex and often

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(1993: 91-98), Śarmā (1995/96a), and most comprehensively—though with little consideration of early primary sources—by Chhetri (1993).

contradictory significations form a backdrop essential to our understanding of subsequent developments in public social and political culture. This chapter concludes with assessments of the normative moral functions of the emergent public sphere and the severely limited role within it for women.

With the extent and nature of print discourse thus clarified, Chapter 4 asks the important question of how representative and inclusive the public sphere was. It examines the processes of institutionalisation—through literary organisations, drama groups, libraries, political movements, etc.—through which the key points of print rhetoric were converted into concrete programmes of action. Through an analysis of participation in a wide range of organisations, this chapter argues that the public sphere rapidly widened its inclusivity, particularly as a result of new patterns of social mobility as individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds parlayed achievements in formal education or in military or government service into a new form of social influence. Yet access to participation in public life remained notably restricted by various factors, including caste or ethnic background, and especially a form of educational elitism that led journals to discriminate against potential readers and contributors even as their contents frequently called for ‘all of society’ to join in progressive projects. Finally, Chapter 5 attempts to analyse how all of the foregoing processes contributed to the emergence and definition of a self-conscious, reflexive and clearly articulated sense of Nepali community. It proposes that the developments in print and wider public culture problematised issues of identity as well as introducing new dynamics of power and authority in areas such as, for example, control over the standard form of language. This chapter contends that it was only through a process of concentrated intellectual and conceptual development that a coherent and elaborated sense of a Nepali ‘we’—however limited—could take shape. The construction of this argument requires serious revisions of some major current theorisations of Nepali history, society and nationalism. It concludes that the communicative and discursive practices predicated on a form of public sphere were fundamental to Nepali consciousness and community construction and that the formation arrived at has furnished the basis for most subsequent major debates over the nature of Nepaliness, be they in the form of national politics within Nepal, or movements for autonomy and language recognition in India.

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## Chapter 2

### Popular publishing, print-capitalism and the Nepali readership

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#### 2.1. Banaras and the birth of Nepali print-capitalism

... [बनारस] हिन्दू धर्मको तीर्थस्थल झै नेपाली साहित्यको तीर्थस्थल अनि धर्मग्रन्थ, पानग्रन्थ र माइतीग्रन्थ मात्र नमानेर यसलाई प्रकाशन-मुद्रणग्रन्थ पनि मानिनुपर्छ ।

*Just as Banaras is a Hindu pilgrimage site, so is it a pilgrimage site for Nepali literature; it must be considered famous not only for religion, pān and rice-water, but also for printing and publishing.*

Hirā Chhetri (1993: 26)

"साँचो नभएको भएदेखि यो किताब काशीमा किन छापियो?" प्रश्नको उत्तर हामीसंग थिएन । सबै जना चुप-चाप भयौ ।

*To the question "If it weren't true why would it be printed in Kashi?" we had no answer. We all fell silent.*

Abhi Suvedi (1999/2000: 13)

Banaras occupied a central position in the development of Nepali writing from the end of the nineteenth century until at least the 1920s.<sup>37</sup> It was both the base for many writers and, more importantly, the crucible of the Nepali publishing industry. Its place in standard histories of Nepali literature has been assured since the earliest stages of establishing a critical canon. Importantly for the birth of a modern literature, it was the adopted home of Motīrām Bhaṭṭa (1866-1897), poet, publisher and biographer of Bhānubhakta. The pre-eminence of Motīrām is recognised by Śarmā (1994/95: *passim*), whose standard work on the history of Nepali literature labels the crucial formative period 1883-1919 the 'Motīrām era'.<sup>38</sup> Motīrām was greatly influenced by his association with Bhāratendu Hariśchandra,

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<sup>37</sup> The first Nepali book published in Banaras was probably the *Buddhichānak nepālī bhāṣā* of 1875/76 (Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi 1999/2000a: 194).

<sup>38</sup> Tārānāth Śarmā (not to be confused with the prolific contributor to *Chandrikā* of the same name) originally used the *nom de plume* Tānāsarmā; he later rejected it. He justifies his classification in this

the nineteenth century's foremost writer and promoter of modern *khaḍī bolī* Hindi.<sup>39</sup> On his return to Banaras in 1881/82 he and Hariśchandra became friends and it was under his influence that Motīrām encouraged his friend Rāmkr̥ṣṇa Varmā to invest in a press, Bhārat Jīvan, in 1884 (Onta 1996a: 56).<sup>40</sup> In his preface to Motīrām's biography of Bhānubhakta (Bhaṭṭa 1927: 1), Sūryavikram describes the milieu within which he wrote and published, and reports that he persuaded Varmā to start printing Nepali books.<sup>41</sup>

The traditional profile of Banaras as a locus of spiritual authority thus came to be supplemented by the growth of new movements in the arts and religion, and by the development of a printing and publishing infrastructure.<sup>42</sup> In his early efforts Motīrām, and his successors, were able to draw on both the stylistic experiments of writers in Hindi and the physical resources of efficient presses.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, modes of learning were also

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way: 'The special features of this age which are without precedent are research on writers and books, their assessment, the establishment of printing presses and publishers, associations of literary people and developments such as the training of writers through *samasyāpūrti* [poetic riddles]. As Motīrām contributed to all of these areas this age is called the 'Motīrām Age'.' (1994/95: 45). The prominence given in standard literary histories to the establishment of a fixed periodisation (*kāl vibhājan*; see Śreṣṭha (2002: 87-115) on the principle and on disputes over differing periodisations) perhaps provides an over-rigid impression of discrete units of literary development. The leading authority on Nepali prose of this period, Śaradchandra Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi, proposes a fourfold division for prose narrative (1993/94: 76): almost all publications examined here fall within his 'Intermediate Era' (1885-1933).

<sup>39</sup> Hariśchandra sought to establish this new form of Hindi as the medium for a public sphere engaging in politics, religious and social reform and the arts. He was actively engaged in many projects throughout the 1870s and until his death in 1885, including editing the journals *Kavivachanasudhā* (1868-85) and *Hariśchandrachandrikā* (1873-85). Dalmia (1997) analyses Hariśchandra's significance in relation to language, literature and religion.

<sup>40</sup> Onta reports on the basis of Motīrām's biography that he and Hariśchandra became 'very good friends'. However, we should note that 'a vast circle of friends and acquaintances were drawn to [Hariśchandra]. A number of them wrote for his journals and were inspired to bring out periodicals themselves, some of which, in their turn, were to contribute significantly to the formation of Hindu cultural and political identity and opinion' (Dalmia 1997: 139; see also pp. 140-142 for details of the most prominent members of Hariśchandra's circle).

<sup>41</sup> Sūryavikram believed that he gave up publishing Nepali books after Motīrām's death but this is not the case (fn. 85). Sūryavikram had noted (Bhaṭṭa 1927: 2) that at the time of writing much was still not known about Motīrām. It is said that while he was studying in college in Banaras (an English education) he started 'serving the mother tongue' but while Sūryavikram would have liked to include a biographical sketch, he was not able to find information on his life.

<sup>42</sup> For an excellent introduction to both the religious nature of the city and its role as a milieu for literary patronage in the late nineteenth century, see Dalmia's chapter 'The Holy City and the House of Hariśchandra' (1997: 50-145).

<sup>43</sup> Indeed, by 1925 sustained growth in the industry led to Banaras accounting for one third of all works published in the United Provinces (King 1994: 42). It is worth noting that to this day Banaras remains a centre, albeit declining, for printing Nepali books.

undergoing radical changes, as Brahmanical, Sanskrit educational paradigms found themselves in competition with a *naī śikṣā* (new education) which had its roots in post-Enlightenment Western rationalism and Utilitarianism. The most basic outcome of changing patterns of education was the growth of the literate population and consequent increase in potential readership for new publications, be they in English or local vernaculars.

This chapter aims to address some significant shortcomings in previous accounts of this stage in the development of Nepali writing and reading. The first limitation has its roots in the separation of academic disciplines and the inherent narrowness of either a purely literary or purely historical analysis of writing and publishing. This problem is by no means confined to Nepali: writing of Hariśchandra, Dalmia (1997: 10) notes that ‘the two approaches, the literary and the social-historical, have tended to remain mutually exclusive’. The analysis presented in the following sections demonstrates that literary and historical approaches can be successfully integrated to provide a richer interpretation of a formative period in Nepali writing and the development of Nepali society. Thus it draws primarily on evidence relating to patterns of publishing, pricing, consumption and market dynamics but closely relates them to issues of literary form and content, genre and style.

An equally significant limitation lies in the selectively canonising aims of many literary histories. Attempting to establish for Nepali a definitive great tradition of writing, they concentrate primarily on high literature in prestigious forms such as the short story and novel. Standard histories have generally ignored popular literature, other than perhaps religious publications, and have thus chosen to highlight production in a circumscribed set of genres.<sup>44</sup> This is generally the result of a restrictive and prescriptive view of what should constitute acceptable literature. For example, the *laharī sāhitya* (romantic/erotic poetry) examined in 2.3.1 is summarily dismissed by Tārānāth Śarmā, for whom its poor moral

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<sup>44</sup> The works of anonymous authors—a category which includes a large number of popular romances, for example—are also hard to assimilate into a critical framework which prefers to deal with individual (named) authors rather than genres or forms as categories (e.g. Śarmā 1994/95, Sambhav and Śarmā 1977).

pedigree disqualifies it as valid literature.<sup>45</sup> This is as much an entrenched historical attitude as later critical snobbery: writing in *Ādarśa*, Pārasmaṇi (1930b: 37) had also deplored this class of writing and the moral degeneracy among young people that he believed it encouraged. A later issue of the journal chose as a counterbalance to reproduce one section of Mahānanda Sāpkoṭā's 'reforming' *Man laharī* (1930; 3.4.2). Here too the situation in Nepali can be related to that analysed by writers on other South Asian language spheres. Of Hindi, Orsini (2002: 68) observes that 'literary histories ... have so far included only texts and authors of an either educational or reformist character. What about cheap, popular publications?' Meanwhile, Anindita Ghosh (1998: 173) is in no doubt about the exclusivity of past approaches to Bengali literary forms, noting that 'the world of cheap print has gone largely unappreciated in the writing of the social and cultural history of nineteenth century Bengal. Historians have tended to draw on the refined literature of the educated middle classes to inform their understandings, and have ignored the cultural self-expression in print of lesser social groups.'

The lack of attention paid to popular genres may be attributed to their low profile in the literary collections available to scholars as well as to deliberate disregard. Thus Bandhu (2001/02b: 215) praises many *savāī* poems (2.3.3) but observes that 'as published *savāīs* ... remained among the little educated, the assessment of Nepali *savāī* literature can for now be only based on estimation.' The degree to which 'lower' forms of Nepali literature were necessarily the 'cultural self-expression ... of lesser social groups' is also debatable: as we shall see, many were rather the productions of higher groups that were readily marketable to a cross-class range of consumers. Yet Ghosh's primary argument (*ibid.*)

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<sup>45</sup> He accuses the 'Banaras publishers' of 'corrupting and spoiling the barely literate young men and women of the hills by spreading indecent subjects in their society and titillating their sexual desire' and identifies 'the very first Nepali literary *jhyāure* work' as Sāpkoṭā's 'reforming (*sudhārātmak*)' *Man laharī* (1994/95: 87). In fact, the *laharī* format had been used for moral works from an earlier date: for example, Bhānubhakta's contemporary Jñāndīl's *Udaylaharī* (Chhetri 2002: 7; on this remarkable religious reformist and writer, born ca. 1821 in Ilam and resident for some time in the Darjeeling area as a member of the Josmanī sect, see Janaklāl Śarmā 1995/96: 60-91). Bandhu (1989: 126) notes that the *jhyāure* folksong 'developed as a powerful element of unification in the multi-lingual society of Nepal, especially in the central and eastern hill regions' in the period following the 1814-16 wars. Elsewhere (2001/02b: 132-34) he cites *Premlaharī* uncritically as one of the first instances of *jhyāure*'s literary adoption. Other critics such as Kṛṣṇachandrasimh Pradhān (1995/96b) have paid attention to the development of Nepali *śṛṅgār* literature but have concentrated on 'high class' efforts such as those of Motīrām and *Sūktisindhu*.

about the new potentialities created by the technology of printing remains highly relevant to the Nepali sphere in India: '...the very ease and cheapness of mass print technology allowed for a number of competing versions of language and literature, some subversive in intent, others deviant only by implication, to exist and circulate as widely as the dominant forms'.

A final limitation of scholarly approaches to date is that literary histories have generally paid only the most cursory attention to the fact that the arrival of print led to the commercialisation of writing and publishing.<sup>46</sup> New technologies, modes of production and patterns of distribution directly influenced the development of new styles of literature. This gives rise to two important considerations that deserve to be weighed alongside assessments of purely literary merit: first, that paying attention to only one side of the narrative contract (i.e. focusing on writers while ignoring their readership) provides a distinctly limited view of the wider social and cultural functions of literature; second, that readership must be understood as both an audience and a market. In short, Nepali literary histories have yet to be supplemented by histories of publishing. As Orsini (2002: 68) suggests for Hindi and Indian publishing, its investigation 'as an industry and a market ... would shed a different light on the literary system as a whole.'

It is not easy to redress the imbalances identified here, not least because of the patchy nature of the evidence available for scrutiny. This chapter only presents a preliminary reading of a limited range of sources which should be seen as complementing, rather than attempting to supplant, more standard literary approaches. Nevertheless, the materials presented here demonstrate the potential that the interpretation of writing and publishing as social, cultural and commercial transactions has to illuminate the formative history of modern Nepali society. In doing so, it identifies approaches which might answer some of the pressing questions identified by Orsini, and offers some preliminary answers and hypotheses.<sup>47</sup> Where these remain suggestive rather than conclusive they may at least spur

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<sup>46</sup> Devkojā's research (1967) on the establishment of presses and journalism in Nepal is a worthy exception to this pattern, although it is not a literary history.

<sup>47</sup> Orsini (n.d.) has subsequently done more detailed research on Hindi printing and publishing in nineteenth-century Banaras which offers many parallels to similar Nepali developments.

further work on the sources that could confirm, rebut, or refine them. This study demands an engagement with the concept of print-capitalism, to use Anderson's term, and an application of some of its theoretical foundations to the empirical case presented by early Nepali publishing.

Anderson (1991: 38) saw European printers as the archetypal capitalists: searching for markets, establishing branches across the continent, moving on to the vernaculars only after saturating the Latin-reading market. While the old administrative languages were used for convenience without necessary national attachment or popular adoption, imagined communities were made possible by 'a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity' (*ibid.*: 42-43). He argues (*ibid.*: 44-45) that print-languages laid bases for national consciousness in three ways: (i) they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars; (ii) print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation; (iii) print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars.

All of these considerations have relevance for the situation of Nepali in early twentieth century India, except that we may replace Latin with Sanskrit-Farsi-English (each occupying a superior position for different reasons), and that we do not need to relate Nepali imaginings exclusively to the goal of a nation state. Importantly, Anderson notes (*ibid.*: 71) the emergence in nineteenth-century Europe of a class of 'professional intellectuals' who shaped nationalisms. They were working within a market (*ibid.*: 75): 'all these lexicographers, philologists, grammarians, folklorists, publicists, and composers did not carry on their revolutionary activities in a vacuum. They were, after all, producers for the print-market, and they were linked, via that silent bazaar, to consuming publics.'

In terms of consumers rather than producers (and again with a specific historical and geographical bias but wider relevance), Habermas (1989: 55) had already noted that the family and the 'intimate sphere' were caught up in the requirements of the market, and not as independent as might be assumed. Of course, the masses were illiterate and poor,

lacking 'the buying power needed for even the most modest participation in the market of cultural goods' (*ibid.*: 38). Yet he credits the 'commercialisation of cultural production' with giving birth to a new social category, arguing that serious reading by an interested public in western Europe 'arose only in the first decades of the eighteenth century, after the publisher replaced the patron as the author's commissioner and organised the commercial distribution of literary works.'

We have already noted the applicability of public sphere based analysis to colonial South Asia, as exemplified by a number of recent writers. Generally an assessment of the role of print and publishing has been central to such analyses. Each area has its specificities—thus Naregal's study of nineteenth century western India concentrates on English-Marathi relationships and new colonial hierarchies of 'illiterate', 'English-knowing' and 'vernacular'—but relies on a broader theorising of print's role in dynamics of power and publicity. Thus Naregal (2001: 4) sees print as 'basic to the making of colonial literacy' as well as initiating changes in the relation between 'high' and 'low' languages: 'Print was not simply a new communicative technology; it also signified a shift from prevailing assumptions about the distribution of cultural and political power.'

This chapter does not explicitly address the relationship of print and literacy (for that, see 4.2), nor the relationship between high and low languages, but it introduces the role played by print in creating a readership, in reaching out to neo-literates, providing written materials for the public consumption of lower and upper classes. It is within this context that the shifts in social models, and Nepali negotiations of cultural and political power described in later chapters must be understood. Motives of power and profit can be discerned in various literary modes. As the final section of this chapter demonstrates, successful Nepali publishers displayed entrepreneurial flair and a talent for sharp business practices. Editors of early newspapers and magazines with a more literary bent could not realistically hope for financial gain but they nonetheless wielded a certain power: as the precursors of professional critics, they could act as arbiters of quality and acceptability, gatekeepers to the world of print.

Ultimately, the power to decide what would and would not be published represents a combination of editorial and financial factors. The early stages of Nepali publishing in

Banaras saw this power effectively restricted to a small number of individuals who were hardly representative of the wider community. Subba (1992: 229-30), not without justification, sees control over the publication of Nepali periodicals in India until the 1940s as representative of an educational and cultural hierarchy: 'most of [them] were edited by Nepali Brahmins and Newars who were always educationally and culturally more advanced than most other castes and tribes subsumed under the term "Nepali".' Yet the complexities, and anomalies, of such a hierarchical model demand further investigation. We have already noted that patterns of cultural control and transmission in the age of print-capitalism did not necessarily replicate pre-existing social orders; so too the dynamics of change in the Nepali public sphere cannot be reflected in any rigid class or caste-based model. This chapter addresses these theoretical and empirical issues in three easily defined sections: who was reading? what were they reading?, and how were they being brought into a commercial producer-consumer relationship?

## 2.2. The creation of a readership

As the development of print opened up new opportunities for literary production and distribution it laid the foundations for engagement in a new public sphere. Yet at the same time it exerted a circumscribing influence, limiting the definition of literature to that which is printed and thus excluding both unprinted literature and illiterates from this new sphere.<sup>48</sup> As in other societies, there was a vast difference between existing South Asian speech communities and emergent print communities, and the realm of print had its own patterns of exclusion (4.4.2). Images of the new readership and the public sphere it occupied were reflected in books and journals, as well as being deliberately presented to readers. Such representations were both realistic and aspirational, not to say occasionally ironic or critical.

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<sup>48</sup> This is a slight oversimplification as the existence of hand-written journals is also recorded for later periods, and I have seen examples from Darjeeling and Sikkim. However, the impact of such journals was probably minimal in comparison to their printed counterparts and I have not come across any evidence for the circulation of hand-written journals in this period. More significantly, some of the popular romances which formed the backbone of Banaras publishers' catalogues enjoyed wide circulation and longevity through recitation to those who could not read themselves, for example the *Vīrsikkā* in Manipur in the first decades of the twentieth century (Deepak Thapa, personal communication) and *Madhumālātī* in Kathmandu in the 1950s (Nirmal Man Tuladhar, personal communication). The same was surely true for *savāī* (2.3.3) and other lyrical genres.

There is, however, cause to doubt the very existence of a readership worth investigating at this period. Even the most cursory perusal of the pattern of journal publication from Banaras in the first two decades of the twentieth century indicates that the lack of a market was a substantial problem for this pioneering generation of editors and publishers.<sup>49</sup> The early demise of *Upanyās Taraṅginī* has been variously attributed to lack of interest in prose writing in society (Sundās 1976: 77) and lack of subscribers (Chhetrī 1993: 35).<sup>50</sup> Chhetrī (*ibid.*: 37) reports that *Sundarī* used to be sent to 250 readers but only 85 paid the subscription fee.<sup>51</sup> After 5 months an editorial in *Chandra* (1(5): 24) complained that while the journal was of good quality and reasonably priced, 'it is a matter of great sadness to us that people have given so little in the way of financial support. It will be clear from this that our fellow countrymen still have no love for learning'.<sup>52</sup> At least this frustration spurred some novel subscriber inducements: an editorial note from the following issue explains that 'some gentlemen complain that their articles are published with great delay; we beg to inform them that we print the articles of our own customers first'. Also anyone making six new subscribers will receive one year's free subscription (when they send in the money). *Gorkhālī* too recognised in its first issue that lack of interest towards language among its 'Gorkha brothers' was a problem. With regard to books, Pārasmaṇi (1917: 92-93) noted that the Gorkhā Granth Prachārak Maṅḍalī in Bombay had been forced to stop publication due to a lack of readership. He cites a letter from its director, Paṇḍit Harihar Āchārya Dīkṣit: 'O civilised people! Shame on us Gorkha people that there is no desire for learning in our society!! If we can't even sell the books we have already printed then what is the point of printing new volumes?'

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<sup>49</sup> The role of journals is discussed in 3.1; here I confine myself to some indications of their circulation.

<sup>50</sup> Chhetrī is a useful guide to journals but not always a reliable source. He relies almost exclusively on secondary sources and is not always accurate: here (1993: 35) he also quotes Sundās (1988) but the sentence cited is certainly not present on the page referred to, and is most probably not Sundās's at all.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, the publication records examined below suggest that *Sundarī* had a much larger readership than 250 (3.1); similarly a notice in *Mādhavī* (1(4)) was grateful that 'more customers than hoped for' had subscribed to it, and that its customer base had 'greatly increased'.

<sup>52</sup> The central position of learning (*vidyā*) in the rhetoric of social progress is examined in 3.2. This passage is also cited in Chhetrī (1993: 43) but he tends to emend spelling and grammar to conform with current standards.

This failure of successive literary journals and serious books to find a market seems to indicate that there were simply not enough Nepali-speakers who were able or willing to read. But this was not the case, as the analysis of popular publishing presented here demonstrates: for example, the immense popularity and commercial success of Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyaṇa* (into its 21st edition by 1925) shows that a large readership for Nepali books did exist. The editors and backers of literary journals which could not break even were perhaps victims of their own high-mindedness. After all, even Hariśchandra—the scion of a wealthy family whose fame and status were assured in his own lifetime—had great problems financing his journals and increasing their circulation, despite his extensive potential audience and good relations with sympathetic city authorities.<sup>53</sup> The despair evinced by Harihar Āchārya Dīkṣit surely owed more to the lack of an enthusiastic readership for his improving books than to the lack of a readership *per se*. In his didacticism he is supported by Pārasmaṇi, who argued that a regular journal is the most effective medium for promoting *bhāṣonnati* (language progress; 3.3). He claims that anything published in a journal will within weeks reach the ears of at least 300 people while if published in a book it might take years to be heard by even that number. Yet his prediction of a comfortable readership for journals (1917: 95) is tempered by disillusionment with regard to the tastes of Nepali readers:

For that reason to bring about particular progress (*viśeṣonnati*) and propagation of the [Nepali] language one must promote periodicals. But what a pity! What a great pity!! What sadness!!! (*aphsos! mahāaphsos!! śok!!!*) The Gorkha *jāti* has not the slightest taste for journals either. Even great people (*thūlā ati thūlāharū*) feign deafness on hearing their language's cries of distress. The hope that *Sundarī* would make the Gorkha language beautiful came to nothing. It seemed that *Mādhavī* might achieve something but just as it was progressing it seems to have been buried by a landslide and brought to a halt.

In spite of Pārasmaṇi's despair, his confidence in the potential audience for journals, and the influence their contents could exert, is testament to the fact that the circulation of printed Nepali materials was increasing and exerting a significant influence on a widening readership. Yet despite the gloomy assessments of so many writers, an examination of

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Dalmia (1997: 230ff.): his *Kavivachanāsudhā*, for example, had a print-run of 300 copies, of which 100 were bought by government (*ibid.*: 236-37): 'This patronage was the life-breath of the paper, for as it frequently complained, the number of readers willing to subscribe on a regular basis remained scanty and with the best will in the world it was difficult to finance a journal out of one's pocket alone.'

publishing activity in Banaras reveals a young industry in rude health, its varied products catering to a surprisingly large market. The survey of this vigorous industry that forms the remainder of this chapter draws on publication records and readings of an extensive range of primary sources, as well as limited secondary materials. It attempts to reconstruct the development of the Nepali publishing business and to establish this history as an important subject worthy of study in its own right.

The official statements of publications in the United Provinces (*SP*; rightly described by Orsini (2002: 69) as ‘wonderful sources’) have, to the best of my knowledge, not been assessed by Nepali literary historians. These records—and my interpretation of them—suffer from a number of deficiencies and cannot provide a definitive picture.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the information that they offer on patterns of printing and publishing, size of print runs, quality of production and pricing is an extremely valuable supplement to existing data on early Nepali publishing. The summary provided in Table 2-1, for example, gives some statistical indication of the overall increase in Nepali publishing activity in Banaras over two-and-a-half decades.<sup>55</sup> From this growth in the production of Nepali print we may conjecture a growth in consumption, and (at one further remove of extrapolation) an increase in the number of consumers. In comparison to, say, Hindi and Urdu publishing,<sup>56</sup> the quantity of Nepali output is very small and does not form a sufficient basis for making

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<sup>54</sup> Some comments on the scope and limitations of these records and my usage of them are essential. In accordance with Act XXV of 1867, quarterly reports of registered publications were drawn up by the Director of Public Instruction, referred to here as *Statements of Publications*. My survey of records from 1894 to 1920 suffers from some notable deficiencies. First and most important, these records certainly do not reflect the entirety of publications: for example, there appears to be no record of the Banaras-based journals *Upanyās taraṅginī*, *Mādhavī*, *Chandra* or *Gorkhālī* (even though in the latter case Nepali literary historians write of the complications of registering its editor and publisher). They detail no more than half of the publications they should, and probably a much smaller fraction than that. Second, although the entries are sorted by language, there are inconsistencies in the way in which Nepali publications were categorised. Third, a small number of apparently Nepali books appear to have been misclassified under other language headings. Fourth, as well as individual languages, these statements contain large sections devoted to ‘Polyglot’ works. I have ignored these for simple reasons of time constraints and efficiency, although they could contain, for instance, Sanskrit texts with Nepali commentaries or Nepali-English dictionaries.

<sup>55</sup> Although the records cover the whole of the United Provinces, all but a handful of Nepali works were published in Banaras.

<sup>56</sup> For the light these records shed on the growth of Hindi publications and decline of Urdu, see both King (1994: 37-47) and Orsini (2002: 68-80), who offers a more detailed analysis of publishing and the literary system, including a brief survey of popular genres that serves as interesting background to the Nepali experience described here.

confident claims on trends in genres, the nature and composition of readership, etc. For such analysis, we must turn to other sources. However, these records offer a convenient starting point for an investigation of the mechanics and dynamics of the publishing industry.

Period	Total copies	Number of publications
1896-1900	50,750	35
1901-1905	21,500	22
1906-1910	47,350	48
1911-1915	62,000	30
1916-1920	116,657	83
Total	298,257	218

Table 2-1 Nepali publications registered in U.P. over five year periods 1896-1920 (SP). The recorded figures are probably only a fraction of the actual total (cf. fn. 54).<sup>57</sup>

To turn to some more specific examples and detailed analysis, we may first observe that large numbers of textbooks were being produced in repeated editions: from this we can reasonably assume a sizeable population of students who, with increasing literacy skills and developing tastes, would swell the ranks of a potential readership for adult works (4.2). Many mildly erotic *śṛṅgār* poems and other popular books were affordably priced<sup>58</sup> while the very large typefaces used in many publications (e.g. *Prem ras laharī* 1926) suggests the targeting of neo-literates or those not confident at reading.<sup>59</sup> It would be wrong, however, to assume that the market for such books was entirely lower class. The back cover of *Navīn-prem-laharī* (1929), a version of the frequently reworked and republished *Premlaharī*, is devoted to adverts for 'karma-kāṇḍa kā pustak', books explaining religious rites. Clearly the publisher expected that ritual practitioners might also be reading *Premlaharī*. An even more striking demonstration of the presumed overlap in markets is

<sup>57</sup> The surprisingly large total for 1896-1900 is partly accounted for by the publication in 1896 and 1897 of seven individual *kāṇḍas* of Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyana*, each in a run of 3,000. In contrast, many later editions appear to have been omitted from the statements.

<sup>58</sup> For example, *Vijñānvilās* (1916) and *Thāpā* (1914) at 3 annas; *Pradhān* (1918) at 4 annas; *Rāī* (1919) and *Śarmā* (1926) at 8 annas (the latter with a confirmed print run of 1,000).

<sup>59</sup> This is distinct from the printing of *karma-kāṇḍa* works in large print to enable reading at a distance, e.g. while performing rites.

demonstrated by 'Rājvaidyā' Paṇḍit Devprasād Upādhyāya's catalogue for his Śrī Mahākālī 'medicine shop' (.Figure 2-1).

( १२ )	पं. देवप्रसाद उपाध्याय ।	श्री महा काली औषधालय बनारस सीटी ( १३ )
* कर्म काण्ड का पुस्तक *		 प्रेमलहरी 
<p>चुडा उपनयन समावर्तन वेदारंभ देशान्तर सहित? )          विवाह पद्धति ..... )          ग्रहशांति मातृकापुजा आभ्युदङ्कभ्राडादि )          अग्नि स्थापना होम ..... )          अन्त्य पद्धति दश दान लगायत; वरवि संम )          श्राद्ध एकोदिष्ट पार्वण तर्पण समत ..... )          प्रेत मंजरी ॥=) गोर्खाशौच निर्णय )          वासीष्टी विधिमा व्रत बंध उपनयन के )          वाशीष्टी विधिमा विवाह ? के ..... )</p>		<p>हे महाशय जुन किताब लाई तपात्री हेरु आज सम्म तलास गर्नु हुन्थ्यो सोई ( प्रेम लहरी ) नाम गरको प्रीतीको शुभा बडा कटीन ले तैयार भयो यो किताब हातमा लिये पछि सय आदि अन्त्य सम्म नवाची न हेरी को राख्न सकला जस्तो ( प्रेम लहरी ) नामछ उस्तै प्रेमरूपी असुन ले भि-जकोछ ? किताब मगाई हेर्नु भये पछि आफै मात्नु हुन्थेछ ! ..... )</p> <p>प्रेम लहरी पैल्हा भाग ? के । )          प्रेम लहरी दोश्रा भाग ? के । )          प्रेम लहरी तेथ्रा भाग ? के । )          प्रेम लहरी चौथो भाग ? के ।=)</p> <p>प्रेम लहरी चारै भागको ? जिल्लावाधे को ? के ? )</p>
* वेद *		
<p>यजुर्वेद संहिता दुला अक्षर को ४० अध्याय )          रुद्री पुजाविधि समत पत्रादार ..... )          रुद्री गुठका सानुजिल्लादार ..... )</p>		
 गीत भजन ।		 वालुन नया वालुन ।
<p>गोर्खा भजन निर्गुण पुरा चारै भाग को ..... )          प्रथम भाग ..... ) द्वितीय भाग ..... )          तृतीय भाग ..... ) चतुर्थ भाग ..... )          राग मालश्री ..... ) राग वादरी ..... )          संगीत चन्द्रोदय ..... ) खोडो जगारन ..... )          चंडीश्रीकवचभवा ..... )</p>		<p>अहाहा यो. पां. वालुन हेर्नु-महाभारत बिराट पय को वालुन अन्यन्त ररिछ एक के ..... )          जैमिनि भारत को वालुन ..... )          दशायभार को वालुन ..... )          मिना भारत को वालुन ..... )</p>

.Figure 2-1 A catalogue of books and other consumer goods places a prominent advert for Pradhān's *Premlaharī* directly opposite *karma-kāṇḍa* books, *vedas* and *bhajans* (*Sūchīpatra* 1916: 12-13).

*Madan-laharī* (1928) offers more direct evidence of a higher class readership.<sup>60</sup> It is of true pocket book size and neatly produced with a price to reflect its quality: Rs 1 for a cloth-bound volume, and also available in a more luxurious leather binding for Rs 1/8. Such editions indicate the existence of a certain number of well-heeled readers. Meanwhile, readers of Subedar Major Śersimh Rānā's eminently respectable account of his visit to London (1913, described below) are treated to five pages of adverts for other books available from the publisher. Apart from a decent-sounding English grammar in Nepali,

<sup>60</sup> *Madan lahari* had an enduring popularity: in 1956/57 Homnāth Kedārnāth published a fifth edition, still in pocket size with large (12 lines to the page) print. He was still to this date printing at the Hitaiśī Press and advertising the Hitaiśī Company. Works such as *Premlaharī* are still being published in Banaras and sold in Kathmandu (Abhi Subedi, personal communication).

Rāmprasād Satyāl has selected a couple of Hindi books that perhaps reach areas not yet probed by Nepali writing. The final book advertised, *Rāt meṃ sāt* ('Seven in the Night') is probably even more risqué (and certainly good value, reflecting the economies of scale of Hindi publishing): 'this book in the *deśī* language contains the remarkable spectacle of seven kinds of whoremongers. This is a wonderful, captivating book and the price is also cheap: only one anna.'<sup>61</sup>

( ६२ ) पं. देवमसाद उपाध्याय ।



॥ अर्थात् पुष्टाई भोगको सुख ॥

**रती विलास**

हे मित्रवर ! जस्को धातु पतला भयेको छ जुन पुरुष मा नामर्दी छ स्त्रीभोग गर्दा कमजोरी ले चाडै पतन हुन्छ अथवा वृद्धावस्था हुदा सक्ति कं भई लाचार छ भने इत्यादि धातु सम्बन्धी रोगमा र बुडाई सन्बन्धी सीकायत मा यो (रती विलास) को सेवन् गर्नु धातु गाढा हुन्छ नामर्द मर्द हुन्छ स्त्री भोगमा धातु गाढा भई स्तम्भनसक्ति बड्छ वृद्धपनी पैल्हेको अवस्था सम्भनेछ स्त्रीभोगमास्थि र रहन्छ धेरै क्या लेखु यो (रती विलास) ? मा आम्बानु २ घंटा मा यो (रती विलास) को चमत कार द्वाइले आके बताउने छ ।

श्रीमहाकाली औषधालय बनारस सिटी ( ६३ )

१) रतिविलास १ सीसी के डा. म. पे. I)  
 ५) रतिविलास ३ सीसी के डा. म. पे. II)  
 ६) रतिविलास ६ सीसी के डा. म. पे. III)  
 १५) रतिविलास १२सीसी के डा. म. पे. १)

❀ चीनीको सार ❀  
 ( अर्थात मीठा चीनी )  
 यो "चीनीसार" ? चामल बराबर ? गीलास (पानीमा) अथवा एक गीलास (चाह) मा अथवा एक गीलास ( बुद ) मा जे सुके मा हाले पनि एक चामल बराबर हालनाले एक पाउ चीनी हाले जति गुलीयो हुन्छ यो नया अचमको चीज नीसकेकोछ एक सीसी मगाइ हेर्नु 'मो 'भन दर्जन को दर्जन मगाउनु हुनेछ ।  
 मीठाचीनी एक सीसीके ) डाकममुल मनियाडर ।)

❀ खटाइ सार ❀  
 यो पनि उस्तै मीठा "चीनीसार" बमोजीम ? चावल बराबर अचार मा खटनीमा हाली दाउ अत्यन्त अमिलो हुन्छ यो अमिलो अत्यन्त गुनी पनि छ वीगार गर्दन ।  
 खटाइसार (सीसी के )=डाक महमूलमनियाडर।)

Figure 2-2 This explicit advert for the aphrodisiac *Ratī Bilās* ('Pleasure in lovemaking') perhaps indicates that publishers hoped the consumption of erotic literature might spur additional market demands (*Sūchīpatra* 1916: 62-63).

Meanwhile there are occasional hints at the emergence of a female readership worth addressing. The pages of *Candra* contained a long-running debate between two women, Sukeśī and Anasūyā,<sup>62</sup> over the role of women and their need for education. Interestingly,

<sup>61</sup> Rānā's account has just been republished by *Nepālī* (2002/03) and issued in book form. The original adverts have, however, not been reproduced.

<sup>62</sup> Chhetri (1993: 42) identifies Anasūyā as the wife of B. P. Śarmā. This debate and the work of other early women writers is examined in 3.4.2.

the author's preface to Śarmā's *Paṭṭhā-paṭṭhī ko prīti prabandha* (1926)—'in which there are questions and answers from letters of poetry, *śloka*, *dohā*, *gazal* and songs on the subject of Love and his consort's romances'—not only justifies the propriety of the subject matter but expressly indicates its suitability for women. Erotic verse was commonly smuggled into Rāṇā palaces in Nepal, where it was avidly consumed by the many isolated female servants of the household.<sup>63</sup> Another readily identifiable sector of the overall Nepali readership was the military. With large numbers of Nepalis serving in both the Indian Army and in local police forces (see Table A1-4 for the figures in 1913) it is not surprising that publishers might target them and that writers might make use of military themes. Section 2.3.3 introduces both literature that is specifically military in content, and publications that were calculated to appeal to an audience of soldiers. Thus the market for Nepali books in the first decades of the twentieth century was both growing and becoming more complex. The consumption of reading materials was becoming intertwined with other material pursuits and the subsets of the market were both stimulating production in particular areas, and overlapping in surprising ways. Nepali, despite the despairing wails of the discerning literati, had developed a flourishing readership, or rather readerships. Their expansion, interaction and segmentation were fuelled by a prolific and eclectic outpouring of popular literature.

### 2.3. Popular literature

The following sections attempt, in limited space, to give an indication of the major genres of popular literature that were produced by the Nepali publishing industry in Banaras, primarily in the 1914-1940 period. This is by no means a complete survey; it does, however, feature most of the common types of publication. Where appropriate, it includes some more detailed samplings and readings to highlight the stylistic developments prompted by commercialisation and changing audiences. While available data point to the numerical dominance of populist formats compared to other types of Nepali book, it would also be wrong to imply that popular literature was all that was produced in Banaras. Apart from the older works of Bhānubhakta and Motīrām—which were saleable as well as

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<sup>63</sup> Kamal Dikṣit, personal communication.

(gradually) critically acclaimed—Banaras also published new highbrow literature, such as Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā's famous collection of poems *Naivedya* (1920a).<sup>64</sup> Equally, Banaras was not the sole site for Nepali publishing: for example, Lekhnāth Paudyāl's important *Rtvichār* (1917) was printed (beautifully, and to a higher quality than any contemporary Banaras work) at the Nirmayasagar Press, Bombay, published in Kathmandu by Kulchandra Gautam, and distributed in Nepal by the Advait Kāryālaya (of Bhoṭāhiṭī) and the Gorkha Agency. The GBPS had also been established in Kathmandu in 1914. Thus this selective presentation should not be interpreted as a dismissal of other work, merely as an attempt to bring attention to many overlooked and critically unappreciated creations. It also serves to illuminate the problematic nature of the relationship of populist Nepali genres to 'lesser social groups'. The role of two higher social groups as patrons and producers deserves particular mention. Within Nepal, the ruling Rāṇās were the only powerful patrons of literature and the arts: their tastes tended distinctly towards the lowbrow, with a particular fondness for Urdu romantic theatre (cf. Onta 1997a: 75 ff.).<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, Banaras's Nepali writers, and even more so the publishers, were almost exclusively Brāhmaṇ, members of a religious, social and educational elite.

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<sup>64</sup> This was published in Banaras by Maṇisimh Guruṇ (of Shillong) and marketed there by the Nepali Trading and Publishing Company Limited. A selection of its poems was also published in the same year under the title *Pañchāmṛta* (1920b).

<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the entertainment for the wedding ceremony of King Tribhuvan in early 1919 was an Urdu-Hindi romantic play performed by the India Imperial Opera House (Onta 1997a: 79). The Rāṇās' most notable influence on the early development of writing and publishing was their strict censorship which encouraged literary production over the border in India (4.3.3). By the end of the period of this study, however, a handful of Rāṇā writers and scholars—perhaps most notably the educationist and linguist Puṣkar Śamśer and his younger brother the poet and dramatist Bālkr̥ṣṇa Śamśer (later Sama)—were actively involved in major developments in Nepali language and literature.

### 2.3.1. Waves of love: the lure of laharī literature

कोही मूर्ख मानीस के भन्छन भने शृङ्गारदर्पण हेरनाले बुद्धि बिग्रन्छ भन्छन् ति महापशु हून हेरनूहोस वात्स्यायन ऋषिले 'कामसूत्र' कस्तो बनायाको छ 'अनङ्गरङ्ग' कस्तो बनेको छ यस्ता कामशास्त्र १०/१२ सम्म देखियाका छन् फेरी महाकविकालिदासले शृङ्गारतिलक आदि बनायाका छन् बिह्लण कविले 'चौरपञ्चाशिका' बनायाकाछन् सो कविपतञ्जलि तीर्थराजहरूले भाषाश्लोक बढ गरेका धेरैले छपायाका छन् तेस्मा बाकी केही छैन, यस्मा ता मैले स्पष्ट गरेको छैन चौरपञ्चाशिका र शृङ्गारदर्पण भिडाई बाचनू अनिखेर ज्यादा रहेछ भने शिखरनाथ लाई दोष दिनु होइन भने बगवाद गर्नको के फेदा ? छपाउन हुने सम्म गरेको छ नहुने गरेको छैन, यो रस नभैकन शन्तानको बुद्धि हुदैन...

*Some stupid people will say that by looking at Śṛṅgārdarpaṇ one's mind will be corrupted but they are great fools.<sup>66</sup> Look at how the ṛṣi Vātsyāyana made the Kāmasūtra, look at the Anaṅgaraṅga: there are some dozen of these love śāstras. Then again the great poet Kālidāsa wrote the Śṛṅgāratilaka and the poet Bihlaṇa (sic) the Chaurapañchāśikā: many have printed a vernacular verse edition of this by poets such as Patañjali Tīrtharāj and nothing is left out in that! I have not been so explicit in this: compare the Chaurapañchāśikā and the Śṛṅgārdarpaṇ and if it is excessive then blame Śikharnāth, if not then where is the point in complaining? This contains as much as is appropriate for printing and nothing inappropriate. Without this ras there would be no children born...*

(Suvedī 1917: preface)

सामान्य जनताका बीच लहरी साहित्यको लहर चलेको थियो।

*The population at large had been swayed by the wave of laharī literature.<sup>67</sup>*

(Bandhu 2001/02b: 105)

As we have seen above, the failure of worthy efforts at selling moralistic books on *vidyā* cannot simply be attributed to the non-existence of a literate Nepali readership. It does, however, underline the importance of genre in ensuring the commercial viability of a publication. It is not surprising that didactic tomes should have struggled to compete with racier volumes of love poetry in the emergent mass market. However mild the erotic content of such books might be—and most stretch only to fairly tame innuendo—some authors and publishers still felt that this genre needed to be defended. Śikharnāth Suvedī's comments (above) are of interest both for their confirmation of the existence—at least in Banaras—of a public sphere capable of sustaining some debate over the appropriateness of

<sup>66</sup> *Mahāpaśu* literally means 'great beast(s)'; it recalls the Sanskrit saying *aśikṣito paśuḥ* 'an uneducated person is a beast' (cf. fn. 141). Suvedī's use of the construction *mahāpaśu* (a grammatically correct Sanskrit form but hardly a common insult) is typically knowing and humorous, mocking the high-minded with a coinage in their own language and ironically echoing *mahāpuruṣ* 'great man'. Suvedī was one of the most naturally talented writers of the period: he had a gift for parody and turned his hand to almost every genre (see Appendix 3).

<sup>67</sup> The frequent appearance of the word *laharī* (literally 'wave' or 'ripple') in the title of *śṛṅgār* works explains Kamal Dikṣit's coinage of 'laharī sāhitya' as a term for the genre, now more widely adopted.

literary publications, and for their demonstration of the lack of a clear line between ‘low and ‘high’ forms of writing and their practitioners. They also provide an entry point to consideration of the most strikingly successful popular Nepali genre, *śṛṅgār* poetry.

This class of writing was certainly not new. Indeed, it was the dominant genre at the *kavi sammelan* gatherings of Hindi poets (Orsini 2002: 81-85), which some Nepalis doubtless attended. In addition to editing Bhānubhakta’s *Rāmāyaṇa* and writing his biography, Motīrām had indulged in writing on themes of love and mild eroticism (Hutt 1988: 126).<sup>68</sup> This bridging of stylistic boundaries by writers extended also to publishers and to readers. And as Suvedī implies, the lengthy and sophisticated tradition of Sanskrit erotic poetry was not the object of critical censure. While Nepali popular works drew on this tradition in *śṛṅgār* poetry, writers and their publishers were careful to make suitable adjustments for their projected market. In particular, they can be seen to have achieved this by catering to specifically Nepali tastes. The version of *Māyālaharī* that forms the second part of *Māyālaharī premlatā* (1928b) is described as a *gorkhālī chuḍki gīt* (a song accompanied by finger-snapping), while the lengthy *Madan-maṃjarī* (1934) includes occasional regional specialities such as the ‘hill song’ *Rellī māñā, arthāt parvate gīt*.<sup>69</sup> Śarmā (1926) blends cultural references with prose, letters, a variety of songs including the typically north Indian *gazzal* and the typically Nepali *jhyāure*, as well as some contemporary scene-setting in Calcutta.

Interestingly, the foremost author of *laharī* literature was the non-Brāhmaṇ Ratan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, whose *Premlaharī* was a runaway success. First published in 1909, this two-part poem (the following year to expand to four parts) spawned many imitators. Interestingly, given the moralistic criticisms that would be levelled at this work and others like it, Pradhān also published a didactic collection of Sanskrit moral tales, *Pradhān nīti*

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<sup>68</sup> Motīrām’s simultaneous promotion of religious literature and enjoyment of more worldly pleasures also echoes Hariśchandra, who effortlessly reconciled his contradictory passions (Dalmia 1997: 267): ‘Hariśchandra as the spendthrift and dissolute son of an opium-eating merchant-poet chose to occupy the middle ground in his writings and champion the cause of the ascetic and frugal merchant ethos which he himself so obviously flouted in his own life.’

<sup>69</sup> The spelling of ‘māñā’ reflects an early Nepali orthographic convention whereby the character ञ (ñā) indicated nasalisation of the attached vowel. This convention had been abandoned by the mid-twentieth century (cf. fn. 284.)

*kusum*, within a few days of *Premlaharī*'s appearance. But while he published this himself in Garhwal (no doubt at his own expense), the *Premlaharī* was snapped up by the canny publisher Puṇyaprasād Upādhyāya of Banaras, who also had the foresight to register the copyright in his own name. After a year, Pradhān produced two further instalments, which went to press at the same time as the first two were being reprinted (*SP*). By 1916—possibly fuelled by sales to First World War recruits—the fourth edition of the first part had a run of 4,000. This, however, apparently took two years to sell: it was not until 1918 that a further run of 2,000 was printed. Derivative works included the almost identical *Premtarāṅga māyālaharī* (1911) produced by rival publishers Viśvarāj and Harihar Śarmā.<sup>70</sup> Pradhān does not feature in any detail in literary histories and details of his life remain unclear: Ajit 'Nirāśā' (1976) provides a biographical sketch, but is apparently unaware of his *Pradhān sundarī śikṣā* (1910) and confused on the dates of his career (see Appendix 3). He does, however, appreciate *Premlaharī* as literature ('sāhitya sṛjanā'; *ibid.*: 15): 'Making a suitable analysis of categories such as love and romance, happiness and sorrow, meeting and parting, consolation and inspiration, Ratan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān was truly a romantic poet or lyricist.' He cites a few samples of *Premlaharī* approvingly (*ibid.*: 16-17)<sup>71</sup> and—tendentiously but amusingly given critical disdain elsewhere—compares him directly and favourably to Mādhav Prasād Ghimire and M.B.B. Śāh.<sup>72</sup>

Limited as the Nepali women's readership may have been, at least some male writers and publishers were willing to offer them access to slightly risqué material that could not have been considered half a century before by Hariśchandra.<sup>73</sup> Thus Śarmā (1926: preface) published his 'collection of incomparable love ... in the hope that it will bring pleasure to

<sup>70</sup> These cousins' partnership is henceforth referred to simply as Viśvarāj Harihar (see Appendix 3). It is the *Māyālaharī* section (34 ff.) which is modelled on *Premlaharī*. This work ran to at least three further editions, but copies from 1924 and 1927 (in the OIOC) had been reclaimed by Puṇyaprasād. In 1931, it was published by Śivaprasād urpha Rāghorām. Although the book does not name its authors, *SP* identifies them as Chandradhvaj and Surajmān Rāi (interestingly, like Pradhān, non-Brāhmins).

<sup>71</sup> These are just fragments: he did not have access to a full copy of *Premlaharī*.

<sup>72</sup> M.B.B. Śāh was the *nom de plume* of King Mahendra (r. 1955-1972).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Dalmia (1997: 244-51, esp. 247): 'male editorship ... probably accounted for the central feature of the *Bālābodhinī* [Hariśchandra's women's magazine] as well as the other women's journals of the period—the extremely controlled, even censored, nature of the subject matter offered... The censorship was such that, for instance, the conventional Brajbhāṣā verse which was printed so extensively in Hariśchandra's other journals was here entirely absent, since it was obviously considered too erotic.'

both women and men, for without playful amusement how can love be complete?’ As Suvedī made clear, love poetry was hardly without precedent, and most Nepali erotic poetry pays its respects to long-established Indian *śṛṅgār* conventions, be it in *nakhsīkh* descriptions of women, or simply the frequent use of traditional metaphors, such as *Māyālaharī*’s (1911: 34, 35, 45) ‘your voice is like that of a cuckoo, your form that of a peahen ... your face is like the moon, your eyes are lotuses ... your eyes are like a deer’s, your body a peahen’s.’



Figure 2-3 The illustrations for *laharī* works could also convey some of the traditional symbols (such as lotus eyes and peacocks) while hinting at a voluptuous modernity, as illustrated by the cover of *Prem ras laharī* (1926).

Yet at the same time, some works are highly innovative. The narrator of the *Māyālaharī* is clearly a soldier, and the affordably priced (4 anna) poem was designed to appeal to *lāhures*.<sup>74</sup> References to transient army life allow the age-old concept of *viraha*

<sup>74</sup> Nepali recruits in the Indian military: see glossary.

(anguished separation of lovers) to be updated, recontextualised for the early twentieth century, and related to the ordinary soldier (*ibid.*: 41):<sup>75</sup>

केइवेरै छैन तीन् चारै मैना, मआइ जाने छु ।  
येतिकै दिन्मा हजुर्को पास्मा, उडिम आउने छु ॥

There is no time: in a few months I'll have  
come and gone; for this many days I shall fly  
to the presence of my beloved.

Meanwhile the appeal of a new sophistication became perhaps a further tool for the ardent *lāhure* to employ in the wooing of his beloved. *Māyālaharī*'s narrator frequently employs the English 'dear' to address his lover (e.g. 'It's time to take my leave, dear (*diyār*), give me just one kiss', *ibid.*: 34). This term adds a strikingly modern flavour to a traditional form and demonstrates the *lāhure*'s worldliness, the casual use of English words contrasting his urbanity with the rustic simplicity of rival suitors from Nepal.

Śikharnāth Suvedī's *Śṛṅgārdarpaṇ* (first published in 1906) offers a more sophisticated interpretation of traditional themes and forms. It is almost an instruction manual, setting out examples of the main types of love poetry, some with Sanskrit originals rendered into Nepali, others shown in various versions as theme and variation. All are accompanied by notes explaining their context and technicalities such as the metre of verses (complex Sanskrit metres, for example *sārdūlavikrīḍita*, are frequently employed). Individual notes are also used to explain difficult words, indicating not least that Suvedī aimed to bring this poetry before an audience which could not be assumed to have had a traditional Brahmanical education. Its sophistication did not prevent Sūryavikram (1919a: 20) citing it as an example of the embarrassing populist bias of Nepali publishing (4.2.1). This may be partly because Śikharnāth was not afraid to include more risqué commentary and verse (1917: 16-17) than most of his contemporaries:

A playful woman says to the young woman 'O sister! I heard that you husband came back from abroad (*parades*) last night. Did you play at *dadhilā* ('curd-play') or not?' To which she cleverly replies in *śikhariṇī* metre.

खस मेरा आये, बहुत दिन पर्देश घुमदै ।  
बिती गो आधा रात्, गनथन कुरा बात गरदै ॥

My husband returned after long travels  
abroad; we spent half the night in gossip and  
talk.

<sup>75</sup> Prasād Siṃh Rāi's *Prīti-laharī* (1919: 14) similarly establishes a military background for its narrator: 'The ship of the British set sail, entering the Red Sea/for the sake of my darling I ran away and returned, armed with my *khukuri*'.

शयन्को लीला ता, न भइकन निद् रौड पसि मै ।  
अनी सौता जस्ती, पुरब तिर लाली निकलि मै ॥

And as for bedroom play, before we started  
the night descended like a loose woman,  
then the morning dawned like a blushing  
second bride.

To conclude this sketch of *laharī* literature, I will present some extracts from a later work which neatly demonstrate the stylistic idiosyncrasies of the genre at the same time as depicting the changing economic and social environment for Nepalis in India. Published in 1938, Paṇḍit Chhavigānta Upādhyāya's *Rasīlo premlaharī* is a slight work, forty-eight pages of verse printed in a fairly large typeface, a total of one hundred and eighty-four more or less rhyming couplets. While not devoid of traditional metaphors it is far more notable for its eclectic references to a modernity that finds little place in more traditional *śṛṅgār* poems. The structure of the poem is simple and standard to this genre: it consists entirely of an exchange between a man and his lover. The man is trying to persuade his reluctant enamorata, who appears from contextual references to be a rural Nepalese girl, to travel to India with him. His attempts to win her over entail a lengthy exchange of views on the advantages and disadvantages of life in India. This makes for a revealing commentary on popular perceptions, especially as they are coloured by consumerism and materialism. This work can be read as an interesting parallel to its near contemporary, Bālkr̥ṣṇa Sama's celebrated drama *Mukunda indirā* (1937), whose Kathmandu Newar hero has stayed on in Calcutta after his studies, lost in a life of urban debauchery while his faithful wife awaits his return.<sup>76</sup>

*Rasīlo premlaharī* is surprisingly involving, primarily because its characters emerge as plausible and engaging. The fact that the outcome of the discussion remains hanging in the balance throughout the poem also adds to its page-turning quality. Indeed, the argument is left unresolved, the poem ending with a last plea by the man to which he receives no response. This volume is described on its cover as 'Part One'; the author presumably intended to continue the story in a further part or parts, for which the inconclusive (and metaphorically risqué) final verse would serve as a cliff-hanger: a good example of the

<sup>76</sup> Onta (1996c: 230-44) describes Sama's personal experience of Calcutta (which he visited for matriculation examinations in 1921/22) and concludes that *Mukunda indirā* presented 'an image of a pure Nepal that was free of the cultural vices associated with the colonial city of Calcutta'.

incorporation of new marketing techniques in writing itself.<sup>77</sup> This work manages to rework and subvert a traditional medium, using the *śṛṅgār* framework of exchanges between lovers—also recalling the competitive to-and-fro of the popular Nepali *dohorī gīt* format—to develop an ironic depiction of the situation of Nepalis in India.<sup>78</sup> Upādhyāya's creation is a revealing demonstration of the flexibility of a literary genre and the potential for imaginative development of older narrative styles. The opening verse (1938: 1) sets the tone of the rest of the poem, and makes it clear that the reader will have to adjust to an unflinchingly contemporary idiom that parodies older *laharī* works:

मौका को घडी, हातको छडि, मुखको चूरोठ ।  
आँखाको चस्मा झिकेर, प्यारी जोर्दछु द्वीओठ ॥ १ ॥

Taking this chance, with walking stick in  
hand and cigarette in mouth, I take off my  
glasses and join my two lips, my dear.

The woman's responses to her suitor's gambits introduce an element of cynicism about his ability to turn words into action that is entirely alien to traditional *śṛṅgār*. The author makes use of the knowing, sceptical character he has developed for his leading lady to put into her mouth (1938: 4-5) some sharp comments on the state of Nepalis in India:

गुन्डाका फेला परेर बर्मा आसाम जाँदामा ।  
खसिया जस्ता गोर्खालि भये कुल्लि भै खाँदामा ॥ १३ ॥

One finds plenty of *gunḍās* on the road to  
Burma and Assam; the Gorkhalis have  
become just like the Khasiyas and make their  
living as coolies.

नारिमा घरि गोडामा बुठ मुखमा चूरोठ ।  
देख्नता निकै मानिस जस्ता बस्नेता गौ गोठ ॥ १४ ॥

They have watches on their wrists, boots on  
their feet and cigarettes in their mouths;  
looking at them they seem real men but they  
live like cattle.

These criticisms do not spare Gurkha soldiers: many verses are devoted to criticising *lāhures* and depicting them as drunken lechers who waste any money they earn on drinking, women, and gambling (*ibid.*: 16-17, 19):

नौतुना पुगी लाउरे दाइ और्लन्छ रेल्वाट ।  
भट्टि का मानिस आयेर हुन्टा तान्द छन्हात् वाट ॥ ६० ॥

The *lāhure dāi* (elder brother) gets off the  
train at Nautanuwa and innkeepers come and  
drag him off with their hands.

<sup>77</sup> I have not located a second part. Although the publisher is stated to be Śrīmatī Motī Devī, the cover indicates that it was published on behalf of the Sarvahitaiishi Company.

<sup>78</sup> Upādhyāya was best known as a parodist, following his playful pastiche of Prem Prasād Bhaṭṭarāi's *Viraktapuṣpāñjalī*. He reportedly edited the short-lived 1940 Banaras journal *Sarvahitaiṣī Patrikā* (Bhaṭṭarāi (1988/89: 402); according to Hirā Chhetri (1993: 72) he was the publisher).

पर्दछ मस्त लाहुरे दाइ माग्दल बजाइ ।  
तरुनि नानि लाहुरे माथि गर्दछे रजाइ । ६३ ॥

जागिर छुटि पिन्सिन मिल्यो सिपाहि जंदारि ।  
पिन्सिन बुझी रोयेर जान्छन् जुवा मा घन्हारी ॥ ६४ ॥

The *lāhure dāi* loses himself in enjoyment playing the drum, meanwhile young girls establish their hold over him.

When he leaves his service the soldiers receive their pensions and then end up in tears having thrown away their wealth in gambling.

However, ironic as the author's intentions may be—and he certainly shows little reluctance to caricature the ways in which Nepalis aim to seek and spend riches in India—the picture he offers of new consumer temptations must reflect an increasingly materialistic reality. The hedonism with which the hero attempts to entice his lover (1938: 8-9) is founded on earning and consumption:

ब्रान्डल सस्तो चुरोठ सस्तो सब थोक सस्तोछ ।  
पर्देन सोधनु प्यारिले कैल्ये त्यो चिज कस्तो छ ॥ २५ ॥

घ्यु, माछा, मासु, तर्कारि खाइ सुखेले दिनकाटि ।  
बसौला रिक्सा चढौला प्यारी भन्दछु नढाँटि ॥ २६ ॥

भर्सक आराम् पुलिस महा अथवा फौजमा ।  
जागिर खाइ रामरो लाइ बसौला मोजमा ॥ २७ ॥

दवनि भइ वसेँदा पनि विस् सप्यौं मिल्द छ ।  
तेत्तिले पनी पुगिने हाल्छ फेरि के चाहिन्छ ॥ २८ ॥

यो यो चिज् आज घभिन्नछैन भन्दिनु तिम्रो काम् ।  
किनेर ल्याइ थुप्राइ दिने छँदैछ मेरो काम् ॥ २९ ॥

Brandy's cheap, cigarettes are cheap, everything's cheap: my dear, you'll never need to ask how much anything costs.

We'll pass the days feasting on ghee, fish, meat and vegetables and we'll ride on rickshaws—my dear, I don't lie.

If at all possible I'll get a job in the armed police or army and we will dress well and live a life of luxury.

Even if I have to work as a watchman I'll make twenty rupees and that much will be more than enough; what else can one want?

Your job will be just to tell me what's lacking at home and my job will of course be to buy it and pile it up.

The woman's response (1938: 9-10) is an intriguing—and not entirely convincing—combination of innocent adherence to her simple village ways alongside a sophisticated commentary on social and economic realities in India. Both serve to undermine the 'Indian dream' being promoted:

चढ् दिन रेल, तान्दिन चुरोट् ढिडो नै खायेर ।  
बस्त छु घरे काट्छु घाँस जंग ल्या गयेर ॥ ३२ ॥

I won't get on a train, I won't smoke cigarettes; I'll just stay at home eating corn-paste and cutting grass in the forest.

हलोनै जोत्ने भये तापनि त्यैसंग विबाहा ।  
गर्न म राजि, छु कुरा सुन्दा पाइ यो सब् था हा ॥ ३३ ॥

जुन्कुरा गर्दा आँउछ धन हजुर्का ईलम ।  
के के छ फेरि भन्नोस अनी जाँउला शीलाङ ॥ ३४ ॥

आज्काल भरी आइ.ए.-गर्न नपाइ नोकरी ।  
घुम्दछन्साहा गोर्खा, -लि कोता यौटा त्यै खुकुरी ॥ ३५ ॥

I'm happy to get married even to a  
ploughman; listening to your talk I've  
realised this.

But if you tell me what it is you know that  
will bring in wealth then maybe I'll go to  
Shillong.

These days look how at all the Gorkhalis  
wandering around doing IAs without finding  
jobs—the only weapon in their armoury is  
their *khukurī*.<sup>79</sup>

Still, the economic imperative for migration is underlined repeatedly. Whatever the dangers of India—both moral and physical—it remains the only realistic escape route from the grinding poverty of near-subsistence farming in the relatively cash-free economy of rural Nepal (*ibid.*: 12-13):

पेट् भरि भात पाइन्छ खान देश मा गयेर ।  
को सकछ वस्न साहुको आहा कर्कर सहेर ॥ ४४ ॥

ठाउने छैन पैसा को काम न चलने भयेर ।  
पालनु पर्यो यो ज्यान प्यारि - देशमा गयेर ॥ ४५ ॥

In India<sup>80</sup> you can eat your fill of rice; who  
can put up with living here and suffering the  
harassment of moneylenders?

There's nowhere to live where there's no  
cash jobs to be had; one's got to look after  
oneself, my dear, by going to India.

The clearest temptation of remunerative employment in India is the chance to participate in the emergent materialism that is characterised by the advertising in populist Nepali publications (examined below):

तिन्चार वर्ष वसौला प्यारि फर्केर आउँला ।  
गहना पात लुगा को ठाँउ देखाइ जाउँला ॥ १०० ॥

राखौला अना द्वितिर ठुला हेरौला दंपति ।  
काटेर मोज फिरौला आहा कमाइ संपति ॥ १३ ॥

We'll stay for three or four years, my dear,  
and then we'll return; I'll show you the  
elegance of jewellery and clothes.

We'll put up a couple of large mirrors on  
either side and admire ourselves as man and  
wife; when we've had our fun we'll come  
back here with the possessions we've earned.

<sup>79</sup> IA: Intermediate Arts degree, a halfway stage between matriculation and a BA. The *khukurī* reference implies that Nepalis' employment opportunities in India are limited to *khukurī*-carrying jobs as soldiers, police or watchmen.

<sup>80</sup> India is referred to throughout the poem simply as *des*. This usage, along with other significations, is explained in 5.2.2.

(Upādhyāya 1938: 26-27, 30)

*Rasīlo premlaharī* could be seen as the apogee of this Banaras period of literary development. Upādhyāya has not only identified his audience but has turned it into a subject for ironic reappraisal; he has drawn on tradition in his choice of form but has laid claim to modernity by his subversion of its content; he has recognised the trend of increasing consumerism and incorporated it as an integral part of his text, and he has done all this as an upper class Brāhmaṇ writing for and about lower class economic migrants. If nothing else, this reading of his work hints that the study of *laharī* literature can be more entertaining and intellectually rewarding than critical disdain suggests.

### 2.3.2. Popular religious literature

The prominence given above to romantic verse is partly due to its emblematic status as the most brazenly populist literature. Nevertheless, religious works outsold *laharī* works by some margin, and certainly had a wider reach in terms of readers. We have observed above the immense circulation of Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyaṇa*, whose popularity, currency, and literary quality place it in a category of its own: it reached rural Nepalese audiences that were probably almost untouched by *śṛṅgār* verse. Print-capitalism's engagement with religious writings was potentially more revolutionary than other genres. Translation and publication enabled a bypassing of traditional gateways to sacred knowledge. Direct access to important texts of mainstream *sanātan* Hinduism—albeit generally of the *smṛti* tradition rather than the core *śruti*—were offered to a readership that included non-Brāhmaṇs, and indeed non-Hindus. As one publishing house (Viśvarāj Śarmā 1928: back cover) put it when advertising Paṇḍit Raṅganāth's 'unprecedented' Nepali rendering of *Līlāvati saṃskṛt śloka*, 'you don't need to search for a guru: read it yourself.' However, this was a double-edged sword: as well as apparently empowering the common devotee in a way similar to *bhakti* poetry, it also enabled the mass promotion of a standardised set of Hindu texts, and standard interpretation of Hinduism. Such publications could thus also serve as normative texts, proselytising for a relatively restricted vision of religious and moral probity.

As noted above, publishers were aware that their readers' interests might stretch across different genres and were alive to the possibility of prompting them to further purchases through well-placed advertisements. The final page of Bābu Śivaprasād's *Madanlaharī*

(1928), a classic *śṛṅgār* text, is devoted to an advertisement (luxuriously printed in red and green ink with a decorated border) for a work of greater religious merit, and much greater expense:

*Devī bhāgavat! Devī bhāgavat!!*

It is a matter of joy that this volume too has now been published in Gorkha vernacular verse. There are many amazing stories in this. The pleasure of poetry (*kavitāko majā*) can be found in this book. There are verses in all metres and *gazals* worth looking at, all filled with sentiment. Once one picks up this book one will be lost in it—it's beyond description. Because this volume consists of one of the eighteen *purāṇas* you will certainly gain religious merit from reading it, and at the same time you will experience great enjoyment. The book is hard-bound and it is available at cost price—we ask just Rs 4 or Rs 5 for leather binding.

Here the techniques of publishing and advertising are put to the service of an innovation less obvious but perhaps more radical, the promotion of religious knowledge to the masses. Just as Śikharnāth Suvedī had realised that his audience would need obscure terms explained in accessible Nepali, so does Bābu Śivaprasād explain the place of this *purāṇa*. Moreover, he is willing to promote it with a hyperbole worthy of the cheapest of pulp fiction.<sup>81</sup> Of course, the idea of presenting classic religious texts to the public in the vernacular was hardly new. This is not only what Bhānubhakta had done for the *Adhyātmā rāmāyaṇa* (upon which his version was based); he himself was following in footsteps of an illustrious Banarasi predecessor, Tulsīdās, whose *Rāmcharitmānas* remains the most widely circulating version of the ancient epic.<sup>82</sup> Yet even Bhānubhakta's overwhelming success did not prevent other Nepali versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* from appearing. For example, Pūrṇānanda Upādhyāya's *Rāmāyaṇako bālun* (1912, Viśvarāj Harihar) gave print-permanence to a form of folk drama popular among Brāhmaṇs and Chhetrīs of Nepal's central hills.<sup>83</sup> Thus we must confront the complexities inherent in interpreting popular religious literature: even the appearance of *Rāmāyaṇa* reworkings may have done more to promote specifically Nepali folk traditions than to reiterate a homogeneous

<sup>81</sup> It seems that Bābu Śivaprasād's approach must have been profitable. Six years later Gaurīśankar Śarmā's *Madanamañjarī* (1934) carried on its back cover the same advert for *Devī bhāgavat*, reset with the contact address changed to Śarmā's own bookshop, the Bhāskar Pustakālay, Ṭhaṭherī Bajār.

<sup>82</sup> Tulsī's work (composed in Avadhī) was also adapted for a Nepali audience, as in Revatīramaṇa Śarmā (1924/25), at the order of Svāmī Mahanta Haridās Ji.

<sup>83</sup> Bandhu (2001/02b: 278-80) provides an interesting description of *bālun* performance but does not discuss published versions. Another alternative *Rāmāyaṇa* was Bhoj Rāj Bhaṭṭarāi's *Ānanda rāmāyaṇa* (1902, Viśvarāj Harihar).

devotional culture. Meanwhile, there were a range of publications that fell somewhere between the purely religious and the purely secular. Śarmā (1926), for example, advertises a new *Kṛṣṇa pad gajal*, poems addressed to Rādhā providing a convenient sacred framework within which to present *gazals*, a verse form entirely alien to older *bhakti* traditions.

Overall, translations or renditions of the *purāṇas*, and episodes from the epics, were the most popular subjects.<sup>84</sup> The *Mahābhārata* was not ignored, giving rise to publications such as Gopīnāth Lohanī's *Nalopakhyaṇ bhāṣya* (1899, Bhārat Jīvan Press) and Kuñj Viās Upādhyāya's *Mahābhārat śalya parva* (1900, Hitachintak Press). More general moral works also had wide currency. 1902 saw the third edition of Śivadatta Upādhyāya's *Jñānmālā* (edited, printed and published in 2,000 copies by Motīrām's collaborator, Rāmkrṣṇa Varmā).<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, more technical works, particularly those designed for use by practising *purohīts*, occupied a swathe of the market in keeping with the large number of Brāhmaṇ students in Banaras or within reach of its booksellers. Such works included astrological guides, calendars, *karma-kāṇḍa* manuals, original Sanskrit texts with Nepali commentaries. Some of these publications rivalled textbooks in the scale of their production and, given the student market, the comparison may not be inappropriate. To cite only a few egregious early examples, Kedārnāth Śarmā's *Dharmārtha parīkṣā* (1912) ran to 6,000 copies, the fourth edition of Chirañjīvi Śarmā's astrological handbook *Bele pañchāṅga* (1912) to 5,000, and the sixth edition of Pratāp Dil Sādhu's guide to omen divination *Śakunāvalī* (1913) to 4,000, the latter two published by Viśvarāj Harihar (*SP*).

Finally, we can observe the emergence of a cross-category of technical works that had an interest for the general market reflecting social changes. Thus descriptions of pilgrimage

<sup>84</sup> See Hutt (1985) for OIOC holdings of versions of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* (2-4), devotional poetry and 'Hindu Hymns' (7-8, 13-14), the *Mahābhārata* (17-18), other *purāṇas* (including seven editions of *Satī sāvitṛī* and six editions of the *Svsthānī vratākathā*), the *Rāmāyaṇa* (including twenty-four editions of *Bhānubhakta*, mainly complete but some published as individual *kāṇḍas*), and other religious poetry (34-39).

<sup>85</sup> On the Hindi writer and publisher Varmā's continuing involvement with Nepali after Motīrām's death see Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 223). Puṇyaprasād's later version of the *Jñānmālā* went through a remarkable number of separate editions by a succession of publishers, illustrating the vibrancy of the publishing business: 1917 (himself), 1924 (Divākar Śarmā), 1924 (Śivaprasād urpha Rāghorām), 1928 (Homnāth Kedārnāth), 1939 (Motī Devī). The *Jñānmālā* was also based on the *Mahābhārata*, consisting of a selection of teachings given by Kṛṣṇa to Arjun.

places appear to cater for a more mobile Nepali population. The Gorkhā Pustakālaya produced a two-part *Tīrthāvali* (1924) whose cover declared that it contained the names and places of all India's famous pilgrimage deities (i.e. their shrines and temples). Its 'Bhāratvarṣ' obviously includes Nepal: the guide starts out in Kathmandu with temples at Buṅgamatī, Paśupati, etc., before moving further east to the Tista and Rangit rivers (in Sikkim and Darjeeling). The second part concentrates on India and includes Kashi but the supposedly encyclopaedic handbook seems to have been a selection tailored to Nepali pilgrims in areas with which they had an established relationship. Also popular were versions of *Tharagotravarāvalī*, works more or less exhaustively cataloguing caste origins and status. The English preface to Śikharnāth Suvedī's version (1915) adequately describes the format:

The book contains four hundred titles of Brahmans and Kshatriyas, fifty of Magars; the distinction between the titles of the four and sixteen caste of Gurun, the description of castes and the origin of the Kumai Brahman, Purbia Brahman, Jaisi Brahman, Hamal, Magar, Gurun, Nagarkoti with their customs. Further on it deals with the virtues and bravery of the Kshatriyas, Magar and Gurun living in the independent sovereignty of the Gurkha Raj and yet obtaining titles, medals and holding diplomas from the British Government on account of their chivalry and truthfulness with their titles, family of subcaste, Sutra, Upa Veda and Veda. This book has been presented most respectfully to the Gurkha chiefs by a well-known poet Shikhar Nath Sharma Subedi of Kathmandoo (at present residing at Panchaganga Ghat, Banaras) with great labour to meet with their necessary demands.

What Rāmprasād Satyāl's 1923 version lacked in detail (only 52 pages compared to Suvedī's 148), it made up for in style, setting much of the information (covering the same range of castes and groups) in continuous *savāī* verse interspersed with some individual short stanzas and lists. It is not necessarily possible to draw a neat dividing line between popular and sophisticated religious literature. For example, Gopīnāth Lohanī, introducing his (1924) Nepali *śloka* version of *Satya hariśchandra kathā*, thanked both his 'best friend' Motīrām for his great help in making revisions and the aggressively populist publisher Harihar Śarmā in the same breath. Finally, even in the area of religious literature there is some interesting early evidence of non-Brāhmaṇ authors: Siddhi Bahādur Basnyāt was famous for his poem on the Tibet war (described below), but he ventured into at least one more genre with his *Śiva pārvatī saṃvād* (1897, Hitachintak Press). This may have been one of the earliest published Nepali religious works by a non-Brāhmaṇ. In 1898, Viśvarāj

Harihar published a translation of part of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* by the distinctly Chhetri-sounding 'Subbā Bīr Bahādur' (SP).

### 2.3.3. Savāi and military literature

While the vast majority may still have been illiterate, the tens of thousands of Nepalis who served in the First World War<sup>86</sup> surely included at least a proportion with basic literacy skills, while several displayed literary talent. The most remarkable talent to emerge from a military background and with a primarily military audience was the singer and writer Mitrasen (see Appendix 3). Nepali had practical purposes for the British as the language of command in Gurkha regiments (for example the *Battalion Standing Orders* for the 1-3<sup>rd</sup> Gorkha Rifles (Almora) were published in Nepali in 1899) and it was exploited for publicity purposes. The story of Ratansimh Guruṅ is the tale of a soldier in the 1897/98 Tiraha campaign, supposedly translated from English in 1914 by Subedar Major (and Sardār Bahādur) Amarsimh Thāpā of the 2/5 Gorkha Rifles.<sup>87</sup> Its first run of a thousand copies was a moderate publishing success with at least one further edition brought out from Dehradun.<sup>88</sup> The prose is not polished: it suffers from extremely inconsistent spelling and rough punctuation, where indeed there is any punctuation at all (the thirty-six page story consists of forty-three rambling single-sentence paragraphs). The commercial viability of this work must have been founded on factors other than its stylistic flair. Nevertheless, the senior critic Īsvar Barāl (1996/97: 90) is enthusiastic:

Its language is the Nepali of Dehradun. Yet the story is extremely interesting, of the sort that it is impossible not to finish in one sitting. Its tragic unfolding pierces the reader to the

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<sup>86</sup> The frequently-cited total of 200,000 Nepalis taking part is challenged by Onta, whose careful analysis (1996c: 104-06) suggests that the true total may have been nearer 89,000.

<sup>87</sup> The cover tells us that the original story appeared in an English magazine but does not specify when or where. Indications in the text such as reference to 'our hill people' (Thāpā 1914: 2) imply that the work was in fact composed in Nepali. Doubts over the existence of the original magazine and over the historicity of the 'Tirāh' war lead Dīkṣit to conclude (1988: 9) that the story is fictional: 'This *Outpost* story must indeed be "story" rather than "history". Imaginary. A publicity work undertaken for British self-interest in order to gather recruits—"propaganda".' This should invite a revision of Barāl's declaration (1996/97: 90) that 'as it is a translation it is not a part of Nepali literature'.

<sup>88</sup> The first edition was published by Viśvarāj Harihar, who must have smelled a profit in either sales or subsidies. The second edition (Thāpā 1916), also of 1,000 copies, reduced the price from 3 to 2 annas, presumably to make it more affordable to its target audience. It is almost identical to the first edition but with some minor differences in spellings and layout, perhaps simply the result of resetting. Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 226-27) believes it to be a corrected edition as its cover page also offers a different date for the supposed campaign; he also notes that Thāpā was a resident of Dehradun and later became a Sardār Bahādur but other biographical details are unknown.

quick. As a beautiful example of an event-based (*ghaṭanāpradhān*) story, it contains within it the seeds of the modern story.<sup>89</sup>

What was it that made this short account not only readable but worth a new edition within two years of its appearance in Banaras? The stated purpose of the story (*ibid.*: 35-36) implies that the military had a vested interest in seeing it reach a specific audience:

Oh new recruits! This story has been written so that you may always remember how industriously Ratansiṃh carried out his service. However much good work you do, if you fall asleep while on sentry duty while in camp or during a war you will be punished just like Ratansiṃh. Once he had taken the King's shilling Ratansiṃh may have given his life through his bravery in war but he earned a name for himself within the government and among us Gorkhalis. As long as you are in the service of the government you must carry out your duties very well and, if you manage this, you will gain great respect.<sup>90</sup>

If we are to take this explanation at face value then the tale was designed to assist in the instruction of new recruits. Yet—*pace* Dīkṣit's (1988) conclusion and Barāl's suggestion (1996/97: 90) that its aim was to show 'an example of an ideal character' to soldiers—the story seems a strange choice for propaganda purposes: with its details of privations and harsh punishments it hardly presents a positive picture of army life. It seems more likely that the narrowness of Ratansiṃh's escape from execution is related *pour encourager les autres*. Ratansiṃh himself does not appear to fit the mould of the ideal hero, performing no egregious feats of bravery and committing a shameful dereliction of duty. If anything, the tale bears the stamp of British military morality: Ratansiṃh was fortunate to have been saved from execution because this allowed him to die an honourable death having redeemed his sin of falling asleep while on duty. This serves as an example of the early adoption of a literary medium as a tool for the propagation of a particular brand of military

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<sup>89</sup> The plot: Ratansiṃh attempts, despite his unprepossessing physique, to enlist in the army. A lengthy description of his troubles ensues (Thāpā 1914: 2-9). The pace picks up when Ratansiṃh's first action as part of a rear guard coming under fire is described; he leads a bayonet charge and demonstrates his speed and bravery (*ibid.*: 13-15). After 10 days' fighting a whole brigade is encamped under threat of enemy attack. The crux of the story comes when an officer discovers Ratansiṃh asleep while on night sentry duty (*ibid.*: 17). He cannot escape court-martial and the probability of immediate execution. However his commander pleads his general good character and he is instead flogged in front of the *paḷān* (*ibid.*: 20-24; *paḷān* is a Nepali adaptation of the English 'platoon', but its usage is looser than the English term; the group of soldiers referred to here is a much larger unit). In further battles and an ambush there are many losses and Ratansiṃh runs through enemy fire, getting wounded many times, attempting to save his injured companion. He is evacuated to hospital where he dies after some days.

<sup>90</sup> Even if the story were a straight translation this final paragraph would have to be an addition for the Nepali readership and not a feature of the original magazine article.

mythology that is somewhat removed from traditional descriptions of *vīratā* and the panegyrics of early Nepali *vīrkālīn* poetry (cf. 5.4).

Military educational opportunities are demonstrated by further publications. For example, Havildar Chintāmaṇi Pāṇḍe, who translated the 2/9 Gurkhas history (1924) at the order of the commanding officer, was the regimental teacher. The translation (with parallel roman and *devanāgarī* text on facing pages throughout)<sup>91</sup> was designed specifically for educational, and propaganda, purposes. As the preface states: ‘this has been written to be taught in the regiment’s *pāṭhśālā* and [by showing how] the regiment’s men have performed good work to boost morale and to make them undertake tasks with courage’. Works celebrating military ceremony and officially approved conduct continued to be produced.<sup>92</sup> Yet the genre which came to be most closely associated with martial topics and military writers was the *savāī*. Bandhu’s two-word description of the genre as ‘descriptive folk-poetry’ (2001/02b: 214) cannot be bettered.<sup>93</sup> He notes the main topics of *savāīs*—natural events, social change, wars, and biographies of great people—as well as the fact that Nepalis resident in India, with a particular contribution from the north-east, were largely responsible for their ‘creation, publication, and reading’. Bandhu is not only enthusiastic about the potential of the *savāī*’s natural and direct diction (descriptions of wars, for example, are ‘exceptionally lifelike and effective’) but offers a valuable encapsulation of the dynamics of production and consumption:

*Savāīs* can be written in simple, conversational language. With their rhymes they gain *ras*. A skilful writer can invest a *savāī* with the necessary *ras*. *Savāī* reciters can lose themselves in emotion and can declaim it in an uninterrupted flow, and listeners too can devote their attention to it right from beginning to end.

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<sup>91</sup> The transliteration was done by another assistant from the regiment, Kisan Siṃh Boharā.

<sup>92</sup> These included many editions of the *Khāṃḍo jagāune kabitta*, a description of military ritual which is still recited at Chhetrī weddings in mid-west Nepal (Philippe Ramirez, personal communication). Cheap new editions published in Banaras are readily available in Nepal: one from Trimurti Prakashan, distributed by Ratna Pustak Bhandar and priced at only Rs 5, bears a cover illustration of a Nepali Hindu wedding ceremony. Its first published version (by Dhanvīr Bhaṅḍārī, also known as a composer of *savāīs*) dates to at least 1897 (*SP*). At least one later edition (Adhikārī 1919) had been taken up by the publisher Puṅyaprasād. It is notable mainly for its strange language, a bizarre mixture of Nepali or Hindi that may be one exemplar of *faujī* (military) *gorkhālī*. Jaisī ([1906] 1981) gives an account of the battles of the 8<sup>th</sup> Gorkha Rifles.

<sup>93</sup> See glossary for a detailed definition.

This genre was produced commercially in Banaras but, probably more than any other type of literature, drew in a wide range of authors and readers: this ethnic and geographic diversity certainly owed much to the medium's popularity among soldiers.<sup>94</sup> Early contributions from India's north-east included Tulāchan Ale's *Maṇipurko savāī* (1896); Dhanvīr Bhaṇḍārī's *Abbar pahāḍko savāī* (1894); and *Bhuiṃchāloko savāī* (1897).<sup>95</sup> Ḍākmān Thuluṅg Rāī's *savāī* account of the 1899 Darjeeling landslide (Pradhān 1982: 100) probably made him the first Kirat writer in Nepali to be widely read. Yet this genre managed to embrace more subjects than the historical or martial. The collection *Savāī pachīsā* (1914), published in Banaras by Viśvarāj Harihar, merited a print run of 1,000 copies despite its potentially prohibitive cost of two-and-a-half rupees. Presumably it was targeted at a relatively unsophisticated audience, for whom 538 pages of verse in large typeface might represent a decent investment. The poems covered a range of subject matter, from the religious ('Śiva-pārvatī, Gopinī, Bhakti, Brahmatattva, Viṣṇu, Dharmādharma'), the social and moral ('Sāsubuhārī, Duī bhāīko prīti, Upadeś laharā') to the military, or those which would particularly appeal to a military audience familiar with the campaigns of the north-east ('Maṇipur, Nāgāhīl, Āsām, Bhoṭ'). The collection also included one *savāī* of historical interest (on Jaṅg Bahādur), as well as two on the Shillong earthquake.<sup>96</sup>

Works such as this indicate the ease with which a popular format was adopted and commercialised by Banaras publishers. As with the Shillong earthquake, Puṅyaprasād also added Jaṅgabīr's (1916) description of the 1899 Darjeeling landslide to his catalogue. That this tale of the heroism of Gurkha soldiers in their rescue efforts should become a vehicle

<sup>94</sup> This underexplored area would surely form an interesting counterpart to cultural histories of Gurkha soldiers that only deal with what was written *about* them, rather than *by* them, a gap that is not plugged by Des Chene's 'cultural history of the Gurkhas' (1991), despite its promising title.

<sup>95</sup> This tale of the Shillong earthquake was later published by Puṅyaprasād (Bhaṇḍārī 1917) in what might be described as typical format for this genre: the slim contents (forty-seven pages of verse in a very large typeface, with only ten lines to the page) enhanced by an attractive title page (a colourful green and red design with leaf-and-flower edging which had been recycled from Jaṅgabīr (1916)). The *Statements of Publications* record that this was its second edition. Sharing a print run of 2,000 and a cover price of 4 annas, one could hazard that the *Sundar kāṇḍa* of Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyaṇa*, also published by Puṅyaprasād some five days earlier, was aimed at an overlapping market.

<sup>96</sup> The *savāī* remains a popular format. Kamal Dixit recently published retired soldier Puṅyabahādur Thāpāksetrī's 328-verse *Śṛṅṅiko savāī* (2001/02) with an enthusiastic preface.

for the profit of a mercenary entrepreneur is indicative of the ambivalent relations that characterised the emergent Nepali print-capitalism. The publishing infrastructure developed in Banaras offered new outlets for *savāī* literature and promised to bring these verses to a wide audience in a convenient, and generally affordable format. In doing this they also elevated folk-style rhyming tales to a form of *sthāyī* (permanent) printed literature. The composer of a successful *savāī* could hope for some fame and increased literary respectability; for a publisher such as Puṅyaprasād, the most important verses were surely the rhyming couplets on the back cover that he hoped would carry the message of his wondrous Mahakali oil to new markets. Meanwhile, we can observe with the commercialisation of this genre an interesting tension: members of historically non-Nepali-speaking, working/soldiering classes were being offered entry into an arena that had previously been closed to them; nevertheless, the major beneficiaries remained confined to a small circle of Banaras-based Brāhmaṇs.

There is early evidence of a successful cross-over market between *savāī* and *śṛṅgār*: even by 1896, Siddhi Bahādur Basnyāt's *Bhoṭ kā laḍāiko savāī ra siddhi bahādur kṛt śṛṅgār tilak kā ślok samet* (a *savāī* on the Tibetan war combined with *śṛṅgār* verses, published by Viśvarāj Harihar with a run of 1,000 copies), was in its third edition (*SP*). Separated from the *śṛṅgār* component, this incredibly popular *savāī* enjoyed a further two editions by 1899. Counting only editions preserved in the OIOC (Hutt (1985: 12-13) has cataloguing details),<sup>97</sup> Siddhi Bahādur's *Bhoṭ ko savāī* ran to at least six editions from 1917 to 1928, and a further six under the title *Bhoṭ laḍāiko savāī* by 1939.<sup>98</sup> The 1926 edition is bundled with a *bāhramāse* poem (pp. 32-35) as well as a collection of odds and ends including *śṛṅgār ślokas* (pp. 36-40). The *savāī* itself is not lengthy (31 pages with only 11 lines to each page) and the style is straightforward, as the opening verse illustrates:

<sup>97</sup> See Hutt (1985) also for OIOC books on the Darjeeling earthquakes (7), other heroic verse (12-13), and books related to military life (18-19).

<sup>98</sup> Bandhu (2001/02b: 215) describes Lāl Bahādur Ārummāsi's *Bhoṭko savāī* as Nepali literature's most celebrated *savāī*. I am not sure how his and Siddhi Bahādur's works are related.

सुन सुन पञ्च हो ! म केहि भन्छु ।  
 अगम संग्रामको सवाई कहन्छु ।  
 सब कुरा छोडी एक कुरा भन्छु ।  
 भोटमा भये को लडाजि कहन्छु ॥ १ ॥

Listen, listen, o *pañcha*! I shall say something.  
 I shall tell the *savār* of a boundless conflict.  
 Leaving aside all others I shall say one thing:  
 I shall tell of the war that took place in Tibet.<sup>99</sup>

The role of *lāhures* in spreading folk and popular literature is touched upon by Bandhu (2001/02b: 105). Yet their contribution to the development of the Nepali language is perhaps most emphatically stated by Dīkṣit, who concludes an article on the subject with the unambiguous declaration (2000/01: 62) that ‘the ownership of this national language Nepali’ belongs no less to *lāhures* than to Bāhuns and Chhetrīs.

#### 2.3.4. Novels, stories and tall tales

This final section brings together, for convenience, a range of narratives, from traditional tales to books which brought accounts of the wider world to Nepali readers. Foremost among these are the popular romances *Vīrsikkā* and *Madhumālātī*, which were both print and oral recitation phenomena (cf. fn. 48). As these well-known tales have been described by other writers (e.g. Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī 1993/94: 211-16), I shall not concentrate on them here. Sadāśiva Śarmā (who also used the title *Adhikārī*) played a significant role in developing the popular romance genre: while his own novel *Mahendraprabhā* (1902/03) is recognised as the first published Nepali novel, his translation of the popular Hindi novel *Chandrakāntā*<sup>100</sup> and close association with the production and popularisation of *Vīrsikkā* were perhaps achievements that gained a wider public audience.<sup>101</sup> Bandhu (2001/02b: 294) dates *Vīrsikkā* to 1889/90 and includes it among works that are related to folk stories, but establishes the first true collection of folk tales (‘folk stories that are current

<sup>99</sup> The address to the *Pañcha* and the *bhanchhu ... kahanchhu* opening rhyme are standard features.

<sup>100</sup> On Devakīnandan Khatri’s 1891 original, an ‘astounding success ... which combined the motifs of Rajput heroism with elements and narrative patterns from the Persian and Urdu romance tradition of the *dāstān*’, see Orsini (2002: 211-12).

<sup>101</sup> Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 153-59, 178-79) cites *Vīrsikkā* as one of many Nepali narratives derived from Hindi and credits Harihar for bringing it into print, although its popularity dated to the mid-nineteenth century, well before its publication in book form. See Hutt (1985: 39-40) for details of some editions of popular romances such as *Vīrsikkā* and *Madhumālātī*. The *Vīrsikkā* gained such currency that it came to be used as a teaching aid, as in Thakur’s edition (1918) which presents seven chapters in roman characters with English translation. It may have been designed partly to train Nepali recruits in romanised writing but the opening ten pages of ‘Notes on Khuskura [sic] Grammar’ must be for British Gurkha officers. Vāsudev Tripāṭhī (cited by Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (*ibid.*)) acclaims *Vīrsikkā* as an epoch-making work that introduced the ‘Intermediate Era’.

in folk usage (*lokvyavahārmā prachalit lokkathāharū*)' as the *Dantyakathā* compiled by Bodhvikram Adhikārī in 1939/40. Thus while it no doubt had an impact on tastes, choices of subject matter, and patterns of writing and reading, folk literature *per se* in a printed form had little role to play in the world of Nepali print. However, this is not to say that there were no efforts to bring folk or traditional elements into publications. Starting with Motīrām, some writers had taken an interest in Nepali proverbs, demonstrating the links between folk inspiration and printable literature. Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān produced an interesting collection of 1,438 proverbs (1908) which described themselves as 'pure Nepali proverbs'.<sup>102</sup> Kājī Mahāvīr Siṃh Garataulā Kṣatrī (1917) contributed a slimmer and less well organised collection of popular sayings (*Ukhān bakhānko pravāha*) which, despite claiming to be author-published, was produced in 500 copies by Viśvarāj Harihar.<sup>103</sup> The apogee of such investigation and compilation was Puṣkar Śamśer's extensive two-volume dictionary of sayings and popular usage, *Nepālī ukhān, ṭukkā, vākyāṃśa, vākyapaddhati, ityādiko koṣ* (1941/42). Some early historical writings (such as Hariprasād Śarmā's (1923) self-published biographical pamphlet on Keśav Vikram Śāh)<sup>104</sup> also started to familiarise the audience with a distinctly Nepali history.

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<sup>102</sup> The proverbs are arranged alphabetically; Kārthak (2001: 100-04) reproduces one sample for each letter of the alphabet. The *Mahā okhān bakhān* (1897) attributed to Badrī Nārāyaṇ and published by the Hitachintak Press may be a version of Motīrām's *Ukhān ko bakhān*, which had been published by Rām Kṛṣṇa Khatrī at the end of 1894. If so, it indicates an early interest in the topic: both books had print runs of 1,000.

<sup>103</sup> Viśvarāj Harihar failed to censor one subversive entry (1917: 21): 'Like distant relatives, like wealth in another's hand, the learning of books is never any use.'

<sup>104</sup> This is not an analytical work to be compared to, say, Sūryavikram's later histories of Śāh kings.



Figure 2-4 This reproduction of the immensely popular story *Virasikkā* (1923) demonstrates two means of appealing to an unsophisticated readership: simple illustrations (the page shown here is the last of a series of 16 that form an extended frontispiece tracing the main outlines of the tale) and large, bold typeface.<sup>105</sup>

Emerging concerns with authentically Nepali topics did not, however, prevent writers from drawing on the wider resources of Indian story-telling, as is well illustrated by Śambhuprasād's successful series of Akbar-Birbal tales. The dedicatory verse to the third instalment (Dhūṅyāl 1916) indicates their presumed appeal:

अमृत समान मधुरो रसले भरेको ।  
सम्पूर्ण लोक हस्का मन खूब परेको ॥  
यस्माथि प्रेम गरी दिल धरि बक् सियेला ।  
यो "बीरबल्" कन ग्रहण गरि बक्सियेला ॥

Filled with sweet *ras* equal to nectar,  
Extremely popular among all people,  
Please offer it love from your heart,  
Please take up this 'Bīrbal'.

<sup>105</sup> The poor quality of this reproduction is mainly due to the cheap paper which has not aged well; many Nepali books of this period are now too fragile to be handled.

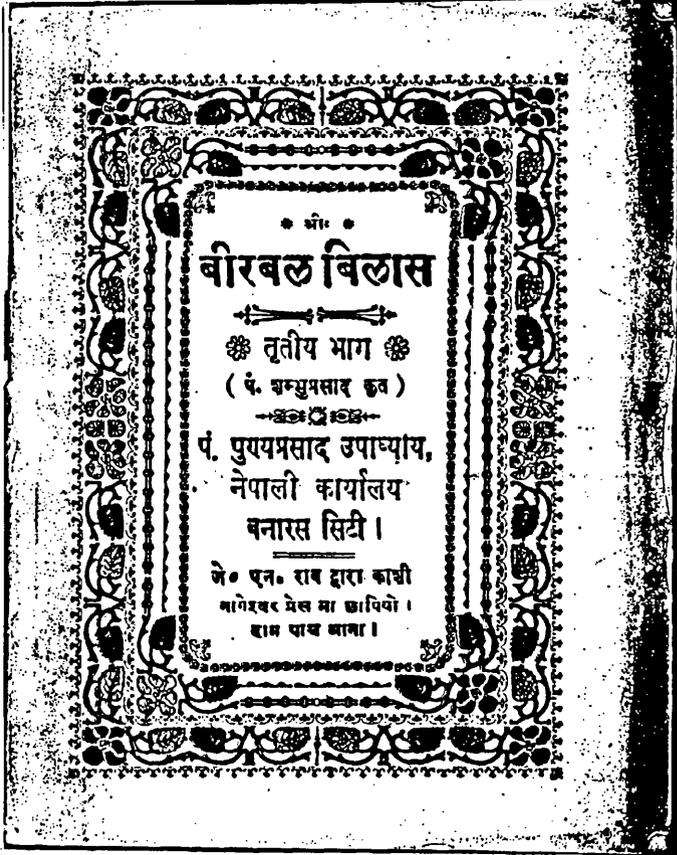


Figure 2-5 Even relatively cheaper books generally featured attractive covers with intricate border designs, often in red and green ink, as in this five anna third installment of Śambhuprasād Dhuṅgyāl's (1916) version of the popular Akbar Birbal stories. Note that publisher Puṅyaprasād's name (and that of his shop) appear in larger print than the author's.<sup>106</sup>

Later editions (e.g. 1920, n.d.) include a six page introduction which explains the historical context of Akbar-Birbal stories. Meanwhile, other tales were bringing knowledge of the world to Nepali readers. Satyāl's *Joy of the World* (1921: 2) announced its educational goal:

यस्मा रीति रिवाज नीति सहितै देशादिको वर्णन ।  
लेखेकोछु, कृपा गरेर दिल दी हेरीलिनू सज्जन ! ॥

In this descriptions of customs, morals,  
countries and more,  
Have I written; please devote your heart to  
looking at it, good sirs!

<sup>106</sup> The prominence accorded to the publisher is entirely typical not just of Puṅyaprasād (e.g. Dhuṅgyāl n.d.) but also of rivals such as Viśvarāj Harihar (e.g. Sadāśiva Śarmā 1917).

यस्तो पुस्तक आजसम्म कहिले थियेन हामीकहाँ ।  
यात्रा आज घरै बसी गरिलिनु सन्सारको लौ अहाँ ॥ १ ॥

Until now we have not had such a book;  
So here—take a trip round the world today  
while sitting at home!

Most descriptions (including Nepal's) start off with a more or less contrived effort to get the precise area of the country to fit into verse. A lengthy description of China (13-27) includes geography, landmarks, food and culture; Japan (27-38) is also given a lot of attention which reflects the interest it had attracted in other Asian countries for its economic and military progress. Yet the collection becomes rapidly inaccurate and entertainingly bizarre. The people of Cambodia (40) are described as Aryan and reportedly speaking a language like Sanskrit. America (67-68) and the United States (69-70) get separate entries, as does California (70), while Finland's entry (75) is wildly misleading:

फिन्ल्यान्डमा तुर्कहरू रहन्छन् ।  
इस्लामको धर्म इन्हैस मान्छन् ॥  
कङ्गाल् पनी पण्डित हुन्छ सोही ।  
शराबि हुँदैने मनुष्य कोही ॥

There are Turks in Finland,  
They follow the religion of Islam.  
Their priests are poor as well,  
There are no drunkards.

Rāṇā's (1913) earlier factual account of his visit to London for the coronation of George V (interestingly published by Satyāl, perhaps inspiring his own geographical efforts) is more sober and more interesting for the empirical basis it gives to subsequent debate about progress and the backwardness of Nepal.<sup>107</sup> Written in a diary format, starting from the day their ship docked at Southampton, he presents detailed descriptions of places and institutions such as London Zoo and the Houses of Parliament. Learning is an explicit theme and underlies his interpretation of British success from the outset. As they disembarked on a clear morning (1913: 1), Rāṇā explains to his readers that 'This place called Southampton is on Britain's seashore, here ships berth and here is the dwelling of the goddess Sarasvatī, in other words the light of learning.' He is very taken with the underground system (*ibid.*: 38): 'Today was the first day that we were able to ride the tube railway. Oh Mother Britain! Thousands of thanks to you for your brave sons who through the power of learning have turned this mortal world into a near heaven and have shown wonders to the world.' In fact he was fulfilling a commission from his friends, who had

<sup>107</sup> Whelpton (1983: 297-99) comments on this work and compares its author's perspective to the account of Jaṅg Bahādūr's visit to Britain and France in 1850. As he notes, Turner (1931) used Rāṇā's book as one source for his Nepali dictionary.

entreated him to record the 'hāl of Belāyat' for them. He disclaims any didactic aims but still manages to provide a clear rationale for his tale:

The purpose of writing this book is not that the Gorkha *jāti* may gain any kind of new education from it, but simply to publish my heartfelt feelings. All sorts of books, accounts of travels across countries and continents, have been produced in Hindi but none has yet been made in our Nepali (Gorkha) language. For this reason I have, as far my miserable intellect permitted, written this small *London Coronation Journey* book and dedicate it respectfully to you.

These works do not represent the sum total of early Nepali engagement with world travel and geography (a description of Jaṅg Bahādur's 1850 visit to Britain was published; Pārasmaṇi translated and serialised in *Chandrikā Gadādhār Siṃh's Vilāyat yātrā*, originally in the Allahabad Hindi journal *Strī-darpaṇ*). Yet, aside from their inherent interest, they demonstrate that some Banaras popular publishing was enabling Nepalis to start locating themselves in a wider world. Thus different forms of narratives brought to a reading public narratives that included old-fashioned Hindi-Urdu modelled romances, modern works influenced by developments in the South Asian novel, and some tall tales from the further reaches of the globe with which to entice pioneering Nepali armchair travellers.

#### 2.4. Publishing, promoting, advertising

काशी जी मा पाइने यावत माल र हारा कार्खानामा छापिएका पुस्तक घडी औठी माला दवाई अष्टेरिया चाँदि का भाँडा बर्तन गहना रामनामि र छोट बनारसी कपडा पाइँछ सूचिपत्र मगाई हेर्नु होस्, गुनकेसरी को अत्यन्त सुगन्धीत तेल ५ औन्स को सीसी के १) माहाभारत बनपर्ब श्लोकबद्ध के ४) बेपारि लाई धरे रुपया कमिशन मिल्छ, नेपाल का श्री ६ सकरि श्री ३ सकरि का अपूर्ब दर्शनिय औठी १) चाँदि को ३)१०) र. को पुस्तक किन्नेलाई असल जेवि घडी इनाम मिल्छ स्तोत्र भजन आरति हरूभये कोठूलो सूचिपत्र मगाइ हेर्नु होस्.

*Order a catalogue and see all the products that are available in Kashi: factory-printed books, watches, rings, necklaces, medicine, ashtrays, silver containers, dishes and jewellery, rāmnāmī, printed Banarasi cloths, extremely fragrant narcissus oil at Rs 1 per four-ounce bottle, the verse Mahābhārata Vanaparva for Rs 4—traders will get many rupees' commission—amazing new picturesque rings of Nepal's King and Prime Minister for Rs 1 (Rs 3-10 for silver). Book-buyers will receive a prize of a genuine pocket watch. Order this catalogue with prayers, hymns and worship.*

(*Premtaraṅga, māyālahari* 1911: back cover)

Alongside the growth and refinement of popular forms, the other major development in Banaras publishing was the introduction of new commercial techniques. The advertisement from publishers Viśvarāj Harihar reproduced above illustrates not only this association but

also a typically sophisticated scheme of promotional incentives, tying book-buying to the purchasing of other consumer goods.<sup>108</sup> Of course, this was not a uniquely Nepali phenomenon. The birth of printing in Europe was also led by entrepreneurs: Johann Gutenberg was a businessman with a successful line in mirrors, while William Caxton drew on commercial acumen fostered as a cloth-trader in Bruges when he established his press in Westminster. And for the prominent *chhāyāvādī* poet Sumitrānandan Pant, one of the benefits of *khaḍī bolī* Hindi over Brajbhāṣā was that it offered ‘a market for novelties and “consumer goods” (*upabhogya padārtha*) from all over the country and abroad’ (Orsini 2002: 152).<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, the commercialisation of the Nepali publishing industry is a particular empirical case, and one which can inform our understanding of literary, social, and economic developments among Nepalis in India and Nepal. The economic viability of publishing depended on a number of factors, including basic elements such as the cost of printing and distribution.<sup>110</sup> The primary focus of this section is marketing and advertising, which offer evidence of the relationships between producers and consumers of literature.

A striking feature of many advertisements is that books are readily grouped with other consumer items, especially items that are slightly luxurious but not perhaps beyond the aspirations of a large number of Nepalis in India. Many publishers—even individuals such as Śikharnāth Suvedī—refer to their ‘factories’ (*kārkhānā*), a term which almost expressly negates any romantic image of the artistically-inspired writer. We may recall Anderson’s

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<sup>108</sup> It was Harihar Śarmā who packed off Pārasmaṇi’s father Bhāgyamaṇi Nevār to the Darjeeling area with a load of books—including one copy of Bhānubhakta’s *Rāmāyaṇa* which he sold to a Newar working in Kurseong’s Clarendon Hotel—to ‘promote them’ (Pradhān 1978: 20). Elsewhere, Pārasmaṇi (1993: 109) claims that he ultimately sold thousands of copies of Nepali books and this sparked the love for Nepali which he passed on to his children: ‘Looking at it, the load of books which my father received as a gift was small, but there was a great power in it.’

<sup>109</sup> This is from the lengthy introduction to his influential collection *Pallav* (1926) which was a wide-ranging manifesto for *chhāyāvād* poetry and *khaḍī bolī*.

<sup>110</sup> Even a preliminary survey reveals a large number of presses in use in early twentieth century Banaras for Nepali printing, among them the Satyanām Press, Maidāgin; Hitacintak Press, Rāmghāt; Jyotiṣprakāś Press, Viśveśvargañj; Sarvahitaiṣī Press, Nichībāg; Kāśī Nāgeśvar Press; George Printing Works, Kalbhairau; Mahādevprasād Kalyān Press, Bāgsundardās; The Himalayan Press (of Madho Prasad Regmi), Punch ganga; Dūrgā Press, Rāmghāt. Printing was not confined to Banaras: O’Malley (1907: 33) observed that ‘there are presses in Darjeeling owned, managed, and worked entirely by Nepalese.’ Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1999/2000b: 77-80) offers some information on the major presses used for Nepali publishing.

assertion (1991: 34) that 'in a rather special sense, the book was the first modern-style mass-produced industrial commodity'; compared to sugar or textiles, the individuality of each book is remarkable, 'a distinct, self-contained object, exactly reproduced on a large scale.'



श्री महाकाली औषधालय बनारस सिटी (४६)

**\* यो व्यवहार बीधी \***

यो "श्रीमहाकालीतैल", ले ई तल लेखीयेका जति रोग एकदं लाउना साथ आज को भोली नै प्रत्यक्ष दृष्टान्त देख्वाई आराम गर्छ, ज्यादा बर्णन क्यागरू यो महाकालीतैल सबका घरघरै छदैछ थाहा पाई हालनु भयेकै छ तल लेखीयेका रोग मारामबाणैछ ।

"महारोग" फुटेको पीप रगत बग्ने भये को छ भने २।३ रोज दिनमा ३ चोटि मालीस गर्नु फाइदाता तिनै दिन मा प्रत्यक्ष हेखाउँ छ ।

"महारोग" हाथ गोडा मुखमा आङमा राता र दागी चक्की निस्केको छ भने हाथ गोडा पठपटी फुटेको छ भने पनी यही तैल मालीस गर्नु सब सुखाई आराम पाछै थये संका छैन ।

"सर्दी" ले हाथ गोडा आङ जोर्ति र करकरि बुखे को एक चोटी यो तेल शाममा अथवा आगामा खुप सेकी २ घसनु एकदं उमीवेला आराम हुन्छ ।

( सीररोग ) संपूर्ण कपाल दुखने आथा कपाल दुखने नाथो फुटने नाकवाट रगत आउने इत्यादि

Figure 2-6 Oils of various kinds were among the most popular products to be advertised; publishers sometimes appear to have devoted more time to their promotion than to book production and the market was fiercely contested. This notice warns against counterfeit Mahākālī oil (one of the best known brands) and also offers guidance on its usage for a range of ailments (*Sūchīpatra* 1916: 46-49). The explanations, praise, and warnings continue for five pages. As well as Devprasād Upādhyāya himself, Puṇyaprasād is named as the sole distributor (*ibid.*: 53).<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> At least by 1925, Viśvarāj Harihar had also moved in on this market and produced their own catalogue for the Gorkhā Pustakālaya. The back cover of Bhaṭṭarāi (1925) carries an ornate advertisement in red and green ink with an engraved Mahākālī illustration in red. The ailments for which it is efficacious apparently include headaches, severe colds, nosebleeds, all types of ear diseases, deafness, hand and foot pains, cracked skin, gout, cuts and burns, persistent boils, ringworm, mange, wind, white leprosy, aching waist, cow and buffalo wounds, foot and mouth disease, and hundreds more... those who want a more extensive list are referred to his catalogue! There is a complicated system of commissions for bulk orders, for example purchase of six bottles at Rs 15 entitles one to 'a railway watch worth Rs 8'. Writer/publisher Rudraprasād Śarmā Ḍhakāl (1932) of Assighā also offers Mahākālī oil (alongside medicines, hats, coats, pants, glasses, all sorts of Nepali books and

( ३२ ) प. देवप्रसाद उपाध्याय ।

❀ औंठी ! विजुली को !! औंठी !!! ❀



यो औंठी भ्रष्टाचारी मा विजुली को सक्ती हाली फेरी शिव वीष्णु शंकर मन चिन्त्य देवता को तस्वीर पनि देखीने बनाई तैयार पारेको छ यो औंठी सदा सर्वदा लाई राखे सरीको खुन कैलै धीप्रदेन अर्को को लाग नजर हान केही लाग दैन वोक्सी डाहीन को केई लागदैन कोई भुन प्रेत वायु कसै को छाया लागदैन निरोगी हुन्छ ।  
 विजुली को औंठी पीतल को नकली एक के ।=) सीलवर चादी को औंठी सकली एक के... ।।।) सचा चादी को औंठी सकली एक के .... ३) ६ औंठी मगाये ? औंठी बकसीस पाईछ ।

हीराको ! औंठी !! नकली !!!



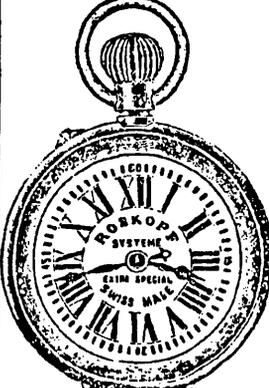
यो औंठीमा हीराजडको छ ५००को हीराको औंठीमा मिलाई दीनु जाँह री नःइ पैचान कोई सकदैन भएतै सफाहले भनेको छ खास ये नमुना कोछ एकके ?) ६ औंठी किनेले ? औंठी बिना दाम बकसीस पाउछ

श्री मन्नाकार्का और म्हालय बनारस सिटी ( ३३ )

❀ साकको औंठी खास गैडाको ❀

ये नमुना को  अन्न पाईस

संपूर्ण हिन्दुमात्र ले पितृको उद्धार गर्न मुख्य धर्महो पित्री लाई तर्पण दिदा सोई गैडाको सीङको औंठी आलामा लाइ ! अंजुली जल पितृलाई दिये [ पितृ ] स्वर्ग जान्छन यस्तो पवित्र मोक्ष दायक मोही गैडाका सीङको औंठी एक के .... ।।)

 घडी रासकोप घडी ॥

यो घडी यहुन रडीया छ यहुनयलीयो पनि छ यो घडी कामामन्ने ५०) रुपया को घडी लाज मान्छ टेमपनी टीक दीछ । दाम केवल ? के २) डाक खर्च ।) यो घडी बराबरयली यो कोई घडी छैन ।

Figure 2-7 Some of the eclectic products promoted by Devprasād Upādhyāya: a 'genuine electric ring', a diamond ring proudly advertised as a cheap fake but which 'nobody will recognise', a ring of rhino's horn which is recommended as a means to *mokṣa* for the ancestors of all good Hindus, and a supposedly Swiss watch (*Sūchīpatra* 1916: 32-33).<sup>112</sup>

Indeed, even the dividing line between literature and advertising is blurred: just as literature now comes with adverts, so do lists of products come with religious verses, as in the epigraph at the head of this section. Reader-consumers, even of popular literature, are expected to be sophisticated judges, willing to spend money on books if satisfied (or tempted) by both their content and their physical presentation. Thus *Prem ras lahari*

goods from across the whole of India ... and a catalogue!). Writer/publisher Rāmprasād Satyāl had long been battling in this crowded market: Rāṅā (1913) devotes two pages to advertising his 'yoginī' oil, which he claims is very popular among the rich and *bhāradārs* of Nepal. He defends his product with an implicit attack on the dirty marketing practices of his rivals: 'Unlike so many others I shall not deceive everyone by praising myself with falsehoods in my notices. You may know what I say to be the truth.'

<sup>112</sup> On the market for consumer goods in Nepal under the Rāṅās see Liechty (1997). In his memoirs, Basnet (1986/87: 6-7), whose father was in government service in Raṅgeli (in the Tarai district of Moraṅg), reports on the astonishment of locals when (ca. 1905) his father brought back a gramophone from Calcutta, where he was frequently dispatched on business. A crowd would gather at the office in the evenings to hear records by singers such as Mahmad Husen, Pyārā Sāheb, and Jānakī bāi. (On the wonderment of unsophisticated Nepalis when faced with new technology cf. fn. 151.)

published by R.J. Śarmā (1926) carries on its back cover an advertisement for *Madan vinod laharī* which touches all the appropriate bases:

The songs of all the *laharīs* which have been published in our Nepali language to date to allow [readers] to sink themselves in waves of bliss<sup>113</sup> are like roses blooming in a garden. I have brought out a *Madan vinod laharī*, in line with current literary tastes (*vartamān sāhityamā milne hisāb sita*), without indecency (*dherai phohor kurā narākhi*), with elegant songs and various types of entertaining moods, because none of the *laharīs* published so far show any literary merit for their ornamentation or *śṛṅgār*. This volume which will meet anyone's standards is in sixteen parts, printed in a handy size for carrying in a coat pocket—a coral tree among flowers. Lovers of songs will surely purchase it.

Here again, boundaries are blurred: the work is praised both for its literary qualities and, in the same breath, for its convenient pocket size. Most significantly, such advertisements speak to us of nascent popular critical paradigms. From a period before the establishment of a professional critical approach to Nepali literature, these represent publishers' understandings of the value systems according to which their readership might judge their products. While some publishers may also have misinterpreted public tastes those who were successful had their estimates of popular demand justified by sales. Indeed, the terms in which the reader's inevitable captivation are described are typical, and stretched across genres. Puṅyaprasād's marketing (Pradhān 1918: back cover) of a new collection of Akbar and Birbal stories features the same tropes that we have seen above employed to sell the *Devī bhāgavat*:

Printed! New!! Just out!!!

Dear sirs! Until now only two parts of the *Akbar-birbal-vilās* with the usual stories have been published and many good stories have been left out. Now after much effort four parts have been prepared, filled with many types of Nepali songs (*nepālī bolīko gānāharū*)—*gajal*, *ṭappā*, *ṭhumrī*, *horī*, etc.—about Akbar's concubines and Tansen. Once you pick up this book you won't even notice hunger and thirst and the stories are such that I can hardly describe them! Once you've seen the book you will be praising them yourself. Order one copy and repay my effort—this is my request to you!

The parallels are not surprising: religious publishing was fundamentally implicated in the birth of the Nepali commercial book industry. Tulsīdās did not have a publisher, but it is highly unlikely that Bhānubhakta would have gained his *ādikavi* status were it not for the efforts of Motīrām and subsequent promoters. Indeed, Motīrām's dedicated efforts to establish Bhānubhakta prefigure the work of the Banaras publishers featured here.

<sup>113</sup> There is a pun in the original: both *laharī* and *taraṅginī*, popular generic names for this type of poetry, mean 'wave' or 'ripple'.

Significantly, he understood that publishing involved more than simply producing in print. Bhānubhakta's public needed a picture of the poet and his life, the product—in the argument's most cynical reduction—needed a trademark image to establish the brand. His biography aimed to provide that picture, even if he had to take significant liberties with his limited factual knowledge of Bhānubhakta's life. And the 'picture' was a literal as well as metaphorical concern, for it was in the first edition of the biography that the now famous drawing of Bhānubhakta first appeared, despite its doubtful authenticity<sup>114</sup> Influenced as he was by close association with the remarkable Hariśchandra, it is perhaps not surprising that Motīrām grasped the concept of publisher-as-impresario.

Producing translations and adaptations of sacred texts provided the most common means of entry into the publishing trade. We have already encountered Śikharnāth Suvedī's *Śṛṅgārdarpaṇ* (1917) and *Tharagotravarāvalī* (1915); he also ran a bookshop, the Nepālī Pustakālaya, and was active in publishing and promoting his own work, as well as himself: indeed, he was by some distance the most shameless and superlative self-publicist of all Nepali writers and publishers in Banaras, no little achievement. The title page of his *Akṣarmālā* (1913) highlights his multiple talents as 'composer, compiler and publisher' of thirteen varied books. Meanwhile, the back cover of the same work provides a list of the works 'made and printed' by Suvedī, generally appending a neat summary to each. Thus the 9 anna *Tharagotravarāvalī* is 'a necklace of jewels of Gorkhali brothers' *jātidharma*'; the expensive (Rs 2) *Bṛhatsvasthānī* is 'incomparably worth examining (*apūrva darśanīya chha*)' (and well-heeled customers can pay eight annas more for a binding that 'no gentleman in Kashi has yet been able to use'.<sup>115</sup> All of these are available from his own bookshop, here referred to as the Kāśī Gorkhā Pustakālaya, with various

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<sup>114</sup> Not only are many episodes described in this work likely to have been invented but it seems probable that Motīrām himself wrote several short poems which he attributes to Bhānubhakta. His publication of the *Rāmāyaṇa* also involved substantial editing, though it is not clear how much (Hutt 1988: 124-25; for an intriguing parallel in the world of Urdu poetry see Pritchett 1994: 49). Editing the second edition of Motīrām's biography, Sūryavikram rejected the picture and questioned its provenance, although by 1940 he was forced to accept it. For discussion of the origins of this image see Onta (1999: 90-93).

<sup>115</sup> Barāl (1998b) is scathing in his assessment of Śikharnāth's literary talents but he cannot help reproducing some of the verses that Śikharnāth used to advertise his books and admiring their playful humour (see Appendix 3).

incentives—commission of two annas to the rupee, free postage, further discounts for those purchased directly from ‘my factory’.

Another colourful character on the Banaras scene was Subbā Homnāth Khativaḍā. Originally of Kathmandu, he fled Nepal for political reasons and devoted the first years after his arrival in Banaras in 1881/82 to plotting. Homnāth was one of the leaders in publicity and marketing among the Nepali publishers of the period. He understood the basic rule of self-publicising: that he should make it impossible for his readership to forget his name. Some of his books (e.g. *Māyālaharī premlatā* 1928 and *Śṛṅgār-darpaṇ* 1928) feature running titles proclaiming his name at the top of every page. *Māyālaharī premlatā* offers further examples of his techniques: no space is wasted, with the remainder of the final page of the first section utilised for an brief notice reminding readers of the availability of his books—‘printed on good, clean paper’—in both Calcutta and Banaras. Meanwhile his interest in the Hitaiṣī Company of Calcutta is underlined by the full back cover illustrated advertisement for their watches, on offer at special bulk discount rates. In his 1925 edition of Bhānubhakta’s *Rāmāyaṇa* Homnāth included a special three-page advertising insert, with the products promoted ranging from books to watches and oils. Homnāth’s approach to publicity, his understanding of the relationships between supplier and customer, between culture and commerce, between the abstract benefits of education and the concrete delights of material consumption, are exemplified in one forthright, direct exhortation to his market (Homnāth Kedārnāth n.d.: last page):

You customers yourselves had looked at and read the books printed by various traders but as no one else had books as pure and genuine (*suddha sakalī*) as those printed by the owner of the Hitaiṣī Company, Subbā Homnāth Kedārnāth; you lakhs of Gorkhali brothers, *paṇḍits* and *purohits* have written that ‘we have not been able to read pure Gorkha books, so please will you print all books, correcting them yourself’. In accordance with the command of lakhs of Gorkha brothers, at a cost of thousands of rupees, having employed other great *paṇḍits*, making them very pure, we have printed [books] on good, shiny, smooth, white, strong paper, adding fine pictures. Now when you yourselves order books, ask specifically for those printed by Homnāth Kedārnāth; while buying them there [in person], look for and buy books with the name of Homnāth Kedārnāth.

We see here an encapsulation of some of the arguments proposed in the preceding sections: the combined or overlapping audience of general ‘brothers’ and *paṇḍits* and *purohits*, the development of a personal relationship between producer (or even brand) and consumer, the use of financial investment to cultivate linguistic purity through the

employment of academic expertise, the emphasis on the physical qualities of the printed product (five adjectives for the paper alone!). It is only in his final paragraph that Homnāth nods to the worthy cause of learning, although his brief acknowledgement of this ideal is rapidly tempered by a none too subtle reminder that his customers must accept the duty of repaying his investment in this cause:

Considering that Gorkhalis should be able to read pure books in the Gorkha language, and that *vidyā* should be propagated among Gorkhalis, we have invested thousands of rupees and printed all books as commanded by you lakhs of brothers. Now may you too bear in mind that it is your duty to order books in our name and to check for our name when buying books. What more can I write?

The publishing house run in Puṇyaprasād Upādhyāya's name was managed by his father Padmaprasād, a sharp operator with little literary inclination who also ran a gambling den and a brothel. His son, who became involved with the publishing work, did develop writing skills but the real author of works in Padmaprasād's name was probably Śambhuprasād Dhuṅgyāl, who had become involved with the business through force of economic circumstance.<sup>116</sup> Nonetheless, Bhaṭṭarāī (*ibid.*: na) is generous in his appreciation of Padmaprasād's indirect contribution to literary Nepali: 'in whoever's name these works were printed, by giving shelter to the destitute Dhuṅgyāl and encouraging him to bring out the skill and capability within him in the Nepali language, Padmaprasād and Puṇyaprasād's contribution in this context must be considered as memorable.' Śambhuprasād himself seems to have found the work degrading and unsatisfying. Writing to Pārasmaṇi in 1917/18—shortly after Puṇyaprasād started publishing his commercially successful Akbar Birbal stories—he had already made clear his contempt for the Nepali publishing business (Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī 1999/2000b: 42): 'Seeing your desire to view my books my heart swells, but sadly none of my books published to date is worth looking at ... until now I too have only printed books which suit popular tastes ... There are also no publishers of good books. And there are also no customers.' Padmaprasād's publishing business came to an abrupt and dramatic end in 1927 with his involvement in the Rāj Kumārī murder case (see glossary).

<sup>116</sup> See entries on the Upādhyāyas and Śambhuprasād in Appendix 3. Śambhuprasād's relationship with the house dates to before his arrival in Banaras: while his early poems were published by Viśvarāj Harihar and his *Śākuntala nāṭak* by Krishna Madho & Co., Puṇyaprasād had brought out his Akbar and Birbal Stories from at least 1916 (*SP*).



Figure 2-8 The 'publisher' Paṇḍit Puṇyaprasād Upādhyāya as illustrated on the frontispiece of *Ḍhuṅyāl* (1916). This engraving also appears in other works (e.g. *Pradhān* 1918).

Viśvarāj Harihar were probably the foremost Nepali publishers in terms of sales and techniques, their flair for self-promotion frequently displaying itself in an amusing manner.<sup>117</sup> One of their early commercial success stories was Gangadhar Shastry Dravid's *English Guide* for Nepali students, of which the second part had already entered a fifth edition with a print run of 2,000 in 1911. The sample phrases were peppered with none-too-subtle plugs for their own business, as in this exchange (1911: 19-20):

Is this drama [*Śakuntalā*] translated into the Nepali language?  
 Yes. Get one copy of it from Pandit Hari Har Sharma of Ramghat, Benares.  
 What is the price of one copy?  
 You shall have to pay only one rupee for a copy. The story of the drama of 'Sakuntala' is very interesting indeed.

As if promoting literature to students was not enough, a further plug (*ibid.*: 28) highlights the long-standing connection between bookselling and the pharmacy business in

<sup>117</sup> Books published in Divākar Śarmā's name were also Viśvarāj Harihar's: Śarmā was employed as the manager of their 'office'. Viśvarāj Harihar's names still appear on covers as the owners of the Gorkhā Pustakālaya, invariably more prominently than Divākar's (e.g. *Vīrsikkā* (1923), *Tīrthāvali* (1924)).

Banaras: ‘The medicines sold at the shop of Pandit Hari Har Sharma of Ramghat, Benares, are very efficacious’.<sup>118</sup> Harihar Śarmā did, however, make a more serious contribution to high literature as publisher of the second volume of *Sundarī* (see Figure 3-1 and Appendix 3). Indeed, as Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1999/2000a: 199) emphasises, ‘he gave refuge and encouragement to many poets and writers’. Of course, the frantic publicity and promotion also reflected healthy competition among Nepali publishers. Or sometimes not so healthy: a successful publication could be ‘stolen’ by a rival publisher and reissued. This is what appears to have happened to Harihar Śarmā’s *Āditya hṛday bhāṣāṭikā* ([1893/94] 1928/29): the near identical text appears in an edition by Homnāth (n.d.), which carries his name prominently at the top of each right-hand page. The theft and unauthorised reproduction of successful works (or thinly disguised versions) was a constant feature of the competitive book market.<sup>119</sup> Although Banaras would dominate Nepali publishing for decades, the models developed there inspired offshoots of the industry to take root elsewhere.<sup>120</sup> The project of popularising and commercialising the publishing industry had undoubtedly succeeded: readers were not only reading, but consuming literature and being drawn into a market that played its own part in defining a new public sphere.

## 2.5. Conclusion

The survey presented in this chapter has, as indicated at the outset, made only passing reference to canonical, critically-praised works of literature published in Banaras. Nevertheless, this study is highly pertinent both to the development of more aesthetically

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<sup>118</sup> The inside back cover of this primer also carried an advert for Viśvarāj Harihar’s other wonder medicine, *kaṣṭūrī chūrṇa*, which deals with almost any complaint that cannot be treated with Mahākālī oil: stimulating the appetite and eliminating stomach-aches, colic, indigestion, etc.

<sup>119</sup> We have observed several examples in the preceding sections. The three volumes of Revatīramaṇa Śarmā (1924/25) each bear on the cover the explicit warning ‘Let no other gentleman print this’. Śarmā was not backed by a major publisher: his books were published by Śivadatta Śarmā (of Dugdha Vināyak) but they were also available in Kathmandu from Gaurī Ghāṭ and Makhantol.

<sup>120</sup> For example, the founders of the Gorkha Agency within Nepal (Āryāl and Sedhāīm 1917) set out the organisation’s purpose in terms which indicate clearly the influence of the Banaras publishing/trading business model: ‘for the benefit of all the populace (*prajā-bandhu*), we have established an office by the name of “Gorkha Agency” ... All sorts of work are undertaken here: ordering goods from various countries and preparing goods to order, sales and purchasing, provision of travelling agents and any work in accordance with an appropriate request.’ Although the notice appeared in the first volume of the Agency’s *granthamālā* (which is devoted to analysing the state of the Nepali language; 3.3), books clearly take second place to general goods in the business plan.

refined writing and to the wider formation of Nepali public culture. The case is not proven, but there are significant circumstantial indications that the readerships of populist and highbrow works overlapped. There is a wealth of persuasive evidence that the emergent book industry made its money and built up its market largely through the sales of basic textbooks and a range of lowbrow publications which then subsidised other literary efforts and provided authors with established models of marketing and distribution. Even the Nepal government depended on the Banaras publishers: production of the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti's *Gorakhā-patrabodh* (Āchārya Dīkṣit 1922/23a) was managed by Puṅyaprasād—whose Mahākālī medicine shop also gets a mention—and printed at the Durgā Press. Writing in *Chandra* as a contemporary commentator, *Gorakhāpatra* editor Kṛṣṇachandra Śarmā Aryāl (1915: 4) singled out the work of the 'philanthropic (*lokopakāri*)' Viśvarāj Harihar in establishing the Durgā Press as significant for the creation of a large-scale publishing infrastructure. Mass-market publications made a serious and fundamental contribution to the constitution of a Nepali public sphere. It was in their pages that we can discern the first indications of a shared and articulated sense of Nepaliness, the exchanging of experiences and traditions, the basis for a *jāṭīya jīvan*, tentative steps towards a common Nepali social consciousness. For the first time, young recruits from across Nepal could be reading printed versions of Bāhun-Chhetrī folk traditions, while Banaras Brāhman (also with a student population drawn from across Nepal) could be reading of *lāhure* exploits from Manipur to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, popular literature—however much frowned upon by many contemporary and later critics—directly influenced the development of high literature. Introducing Motīrām's biography of Bhānubhakta, Sūryavikram devotes a full page (Bhaṭṭa 1927: 3-4) to the need to revive and make use of Nepali's *jāṭīya chhanda* (national/ethnic metres), especially *savāī*. In fact, he is speaking more of rehabilitation among litterateurs than revival: we have seen that *savāī* was a healthy and flourishing format.<sup>121</sup> He singles out Dharaṅdhar for praise in turning to this topic (recalling Devīprasād Sāpkoṭā's appreciation of his 'natural' style; fn. 267) but urges poets to work hard to rescue and make glorious the

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<sup>121</sup> Sūryavikram betrays his high aesthetic standards when he claims that apart from a couple of *savāīs* full of *vīr ras* on the Tibet war, there are no other good works in this metre.

*jātīya chhandas*. This reflects an important aspect of modern Nepali literature as it was being formed in the early twentieth century: it sought to be both comparable to other South Asian literatures and yet to retain a unique essence. This distinctiveness, Sūryavikram argued, could be found in *jāti* heritage but had to be refined. As his metaphor had it, folk metres are like copper pots: they must be polished before they will shine. Such an attitude neatly encapsulated desire for the authenticity of Nepali ethnic experience without sacrificing commitment to sophisticated stylistic values. The development of such an aesthetic owed much to the pioneering work that we have observed in popularising folk and regional formats, and rediscovering Nepali proverbs as a topic for research.

This chapter has further highlighted various aspects of the early development of Nepali publishing in Banaras in an attempt to unravel the story of nascent Nepali print-capitalism. In particular, it has sought to understand the dynamics of an expanding readership which publishers hoped to serve and exploit by refining the practical skills of printing, publishing and distribution, and by introducing novel marketing techniques. It should also have illustrated the diversity of this period's vigorous and idiosyncratic writings, while demonstrating that success in Nepali publishing at this time depended on a combination of tradition and innovation. Popular literature drew on long traditions in different genres—be it through translation, adaptation or imitation—as well as expanding into entirely new forms such as the short story and taking on new attitudes to society and morality.

Despite its manifest commercial success, however, there remained one overriding limitation of the Nepali literary scene in Banaras: caste and class domination by educated Brāhman who were not reflective of their changing audience. While they managed to cater to popular tastes, there is little evidence of a democratisation of the literary world allowing 'self-expression of lower groups'. Nor was the Banaras Nepali community structured in the same way as the much larger Nepali society of Nepal itself, or that of the Darjeeling area. Writing from Banaras engaged with topical issues, in particular Nepal-oriented politics, but was often removed from the pressing issues such as education, employment and administration which faced the settled and ethnically-mixed Nepali community of Darjeeling. Later chapters explore the radical changes in the role of Nepali that occurred as it was adopted by a new generation of activists in Darjeeling. The next chapter, however,

bridges this geographical divide as it demonstrates how journals in both Banaras and Darjeeling contributed to the definition of a newly dominant rhetoric, that of social progress.

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## Chapter 3

### Visions of social progress: discourses of learning, *unnati* and the mother tongue

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Analysis of the discourse which emerged around themes of *vidyā* and *unnati* (broadly speaking, ‘learning’ and ‘progress’) is essential to understanding the context within which Nepali *jāti* consciousness emerged. Inextricably bound to the rhetoric of learning was a growing awareness, later tied to specific projects, of its links to the development of the Nepali language. The terminology employed in discussion of these topics—its introduction, development and deployment, nuances, ambiguities and internal contradictions—forms the central focus of this chapter. It argues that what has been presented as a relatively homogeneous discourse is in fact marked by wide differences of viewpoint and opinion, and it demonstrates that detailed tracing of the development of this discourse affords insights into social formation and dynamics which significantly enhance readings of *jāti* and national identity. This investigation opens with an examination of how the literary sphere described in the previous chapter developed more directly discursive functions through the publication of journals. The central sections examine the meaning of *vidyā* and *unnati*, the sense of Nepali backwardness that spurred social reform, the emergence of the Nepali language as a focal point for such efforts, conservative and progressive visions of progress, and the normative moral framework within which most writers presented their social thinking. Finally, the position of women in the literary sphere is considered, in terms of women writers’ tentative steps into the world of print, and the depictions of feminine values propagated by male writers.

The overall significance of the movement for self-improvement within Indian Nepali society at this stage has recently been assessed by Pratyoush Onta in the light of its

subsequent contribution to Nepali nationalism. He identifies (1996a: 39) a ‘discourse of self-improvement designed broadly around the two themes of general education and the progress of the “Gorkhā language” generated in Banaras and adopted by Darjeeling, which became ‘an important site for “the rhetoric of improvement”’.<sup>122</sup> Onta accurately identifies some of the broader contours of debate but is hampered by his lack of access to much of the original discussion contained in contemporary journals and his concentration on a few major actors and their contribution to his narrow theme of bravery.<sup>123</sup> His ‘pointedly partial introduction’ to the life and work of Nepali *jāti* activists in India (*ibid.*: 41) can only be a starting point for an exploration of a discourse that proves to be much more complex and revealing when examined in detail. As this chapter demonstrates, a close reading of journals permits a richer understanding of key themes of social and cultural development.

### 3.1. From literary to discursive sphere: re-reading early Nepali journals

उन्नति गर्न देश र सामाजिको चाल नै फरक हुन्छ ।  
आज हाम्रो ज्यामीहरूलाई खबर कागत् पढ्ने कुरा  
सुनायौं भने तिनीहरू ता हॉस्छन् हॉस्छन्, हामी पढ्ने  
लेखेका भनाउँदाहरू पनि यो कुरा सुनेर हॉस्ने छौं । तर  
राम्रि बिचार गर्यौं भने हाम्रो उन्नति हुन न सकेको  
एउटा मुख्य कारण त पत्र पत्रिकाको अभाव नै हो ।  
जैले सम्म हामीले नेपाली भाषामा एउटा दैनिक खबर  
कागत् // निकाल्न सक्ने छैनौं तैले सम्म हामीले यसरी  
नै ... जीवन व्यतित गर्नु पर्ने छ । एउटा कुनामा  
नेपालीले गरेको कुरा अर्को नेपालीले जैले सम्म चाल  
पाउने छैनन् तैले सम्म हाम्रो उन्नति हुने छैन ।

*The very ways of a country and society making unnati are different. Today if we speak to daily wage labourers of reading newspapers, they do nothing but laugh, and we who call ourselves educated will also laugh on hearing this. But if we think carefully, one main reason that we have not been able to achieve unnati is the lack of journals. Until we can bring out a daily newspaper in the Nepali language we will have to pass our lives like this ... As long as other Nepalis do not find out about what is done by Nepalis living in one corner our unnati shall not be achieved.*

(Pradhān 1934: 34-35)

In the early 1920s, Nepal’s Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti added to its initial range of instructional materials a thirty-seven page guide to writing letters in Nepali, the *Gorakhā-*

<sup>122</sup> Onta borrows this phrase from Sanjay Joshi’s PhD thesis (1995, revised and published in 2001).

<sup>123</sup> ‘As far as the relevant newspapers and magazines published in India in the early part of this century are concerned, none have been microfilmed to my knowledge and were thus not available to me. Some of the materials first published in these newspapers by the persons discussed below have been later included in their collected works and I have used them extensively’ (Onta 1996a: 40). Here Onta may have fallen victim to the self-selection practised by authors who compile in later life the early writings that they hope represent their best work or their noblest aims. Such selections are far removed from the full content of original expression and debate.

*patrabodh* (Āchārya Dīkṣit 1922/23a). Apart from its stylistic comments, this manual is historically instructive as a testament to the entrenched hierarchies of Nepali society. After specifying the appropriate salutations for royalty, government and military officers, and Brāhmaṇs, it offers more than two dozen sample letters: from father to son and vice versa, from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, from Kṣatriyas to Brāhmaṇs, from Brāhamāṇs to lower castes, from soldier to officer, servant to master, senior official to junior, etc., etc. The rigorously prescribed formulas are complex, ornate and verbose; only when addressing younger relatives and women were writers allowed to consider a simple and direct approach. The world of social hierarchy had been comprehensively translated into the world of letters. It is against this background that we may first understand the potentially radical role of journals in offering a chance to move away from such ordered communication: compared to the intricate code of established class relationships, editors' and essayists' appeals simply to 'country brothers' or 'lovers of the mother tongue' implied an innovative equality. This echoes the eighteenth century European achievement of 'a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether' (Habermas 1989: 36). Uncertainty over the ultimate readership of printed periodicals was the first step towards a limited democratisation of the world of letters.

This bypassing of the recognition of individual status was one of the reasons why the Rāṇā regime was inherently suspicious of journals. Until the arrival of *Śārādā* in 1935, the government *Gorkhāpatra* was the only periodical published within Nepal. Given its political situation, it is not surprising that this weekly newspaper did not greatly challenge the critical faculties of its contributors or readers. While not initially a propaganda vehicle—its function as active promoter of state policies developed over the decades—it formed a convenient platform for government announcements such as reshuffles of official positions, army postings, or royal honours. Nevertheless it did, from the earliest stages, display several of the features that would mark the role of journals within the Nepali public sphere. First, reflecting the developments that the last chapter demonstrated in the world of books, it linked the literary and commercial, using short stories and moral tales as well as advertisements to fill its pages. Second, it linked the printed word to existing patterns of trade and commerce by, for example, regularly reporting market prices for a number of

basic goods, or daily wage rates for different occupations. Third, its brief news reports from across the country, however politically innocuous (during the monsoon, for example, records of rainfall in particular districts were common), provided a basic representation to the print community of the geographical extent and variety of the country. Fourth, the complementing of local news with reports from India and around the world initiated a new means of siting Nepalis within a regional and global context and providing information, however limited, by which readers might compare their situation with that of other peoples and countries. Fifth, the way in which readers were addressed as a presumed collectivity, be it in subscription drives or moral appeals, foreshadowed Indian Nepali journals' communication with increasingly widely based and sophisticated readerships.

The first Banaras Nepali journal had been *Upanyās Taraṅginī* (1902), which was not notably successful in its aim of developing the novel genre in Nepali, although it published various pioneering narratives by Sadāśiva Śarma (cf. Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī 1993/94: 120-21). The more successful and influential *Sundarī* was published from 1906 by the Rasik Samāj (a literary society of young Nepalis studying in Banaras), and joined by *Mādhavī* (1908-09), edited and published under a pseudonym by Rāmmani Ācharya Dīkṣit.<sup>124</sup> After a few years' gap came *Chandra* (September 1914 to August 1915) and immediately afterwards *Gorkhālī* (September 1915 until mid-1917), Banaras's first Nepali weekly.<sup>125</sup> As well as publishing major poets such as Dharaṅīdhar and Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl, it sowed the seeds for future dramatic writing by (incompletely) serialising Śambhuprasād's *Śākuntala nāṭak* (cf. 4.3.1) and launched the promising young prose writer Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā, publishing some of his stories and the essay 'Mother tongue'.<sup>126</sup> It also published essays by

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<sup>124</sup> Journals further contributed to a sense of a unified public sphere by referring to one another; thus *Sundarī* (2(5)) welcomed the first issue of *Mādhavī*—'if by this the enthusiasm of *deśī bhāī* increases then the *unnati* of the *deśbhāṣā* may proceed well'—as well as the establishment in Bombay of the Gorkhā Grantha Prachārak Maṇḍalī.

<sup>125</sup> Scholars dispute both the date of its publication and the role of various editorial staff, although Sūryavikram, who was in day-to-day charge, insists that Kharīdār Kṛṣṇaprasād Koirālā, Mādhavprasād Regmī and Śiva Regmī were usually responsible for the editing (Chhetri 1993: 44). Kṛṣṇaprasād Koirālā was the father of B.P. Koirala and a major figure in the Banaras Nepali community (see fn. 349 for references).

<sup>126</sup> This was published under his usual nom de plume, Vijñānvilās. This essay is described by Śarmā (1994/95: 73) as Nepali's first language-related research essay (*anusandhānātmak lekḥ*). He presumably excludes Kṛṣṇachandra Śarmā Āryāl's earlier 'Gorakhā-bhāṣā kī unnati' (1915; discussed

Pārasmaṇi (e.g. Pradhān 1917). After eleven months of publication *Gorkhālī* was complaining of financial difficulties (Chhetrī 1993: 47). In May 1917 Devīprasād Sāpkoṭā wrote to Harisimh Thāpā of Kurseong, explaining that Mādhav Prasād Regmī (of the Himalayan Press) was pulling out of the business and that the press would be forced to close. He offered to hand over the *Gorkhālī* subscription list to allow Thāpā to continue with it, a challenge which he took up with Pārasmaṇi as his editor, publisher and press manager. *Gorkhālī*'s financial problems thus led indirectly to the establishment of *Chandrikā*. Banaras's last contribution to the field of Nepali journals in the decades up to 1940 was Sūryavikram's *Janmabhūmi*, a short-lived effort in early 1922. Meanwhile, as all these periodicals came and went, the Christian priest Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān had been continuously publishing the weekly newspaper *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat* from his Gorkha Press in Darjeeling: remarkably, he sustained this largely single-handed effort for twenty-nine years (1901-1930). The 1920s and 1930s saw a gradual, but far from dramatic, expansion in the geographical base of production, with important contributions in the form of *Gorkhā Saṁsār* (1926-1929) and *Taruṅ Gorkhā* (1928-1933) from Dehradun, *Ādarśa* (1930), *Nebulā* (1935-1936) and *Parivartan* (1937-38) from Kalimpong, the *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā* (1931-1936) from Darjeeling, and *Gorkhā Sevak* (1935-1938) from Shillong.

This chapter extends the analysis of the Nepali literary sphere by shifting its focus from the publishing industry to the birth of public debate. Despite their interrupted publication, it was journals that enabled a consuming, literate public to constitute itself as a discursive arena. The means by which they bridged the worlds of commercial print, literary creativity, and a debating community are well illustrated by the career of *Sundarī*. Its publishers embraced the main themes of social progress when they set out their motivation for establishing the journal. They had observed that 'many people are bringing about the *unnati* of their own countries by publishing daily, weekly and monthly journals in many languages'; 'recognising this deficit within ourselves, and considering that as not everyone can understand Sanskrit it would be best to rely on the common people's own mother

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in 3.3) because of its lack of attention to the history of the Nepali language, despite its thorough treatment of contemporary language-related issues. On Padmanābh see Appendix 3.

tongue, the Nepali language ... we have brought out this *Sundarī* (1(1): 1-2). The Rasik Samāj's literary enthusiasm was also balanced by a worldly concern for the value of news and information, seeking (*ibid.*: 1) to inform the Nepali public 'by giving descriptions of various subjects, by explaining how various people earned names for themselves, by giving news of countries new and old and saying what is happening in them'. In fact, the first news item appeared only on the final page of the second issue, and related to the very parochial issue of an increase in salaries for Sanskrit teachers in government schools. Yet *Sundarī*'s news section developed into a surprisingly political platform offering positive reports on the *svadeśī* movement; by its second volume, it normally included four pages of mixed news under the title 'Deśvṛttānta'.<sup>127</sup> *Mādhavī* gave even more prominence to reportage, its 'Vividh Samāchār' section generally occupying several pages at the front of the journal.

This significant informative function of periodicals is consistently ignored by Nepali literary historians, who almost exclusively highlight contributions by authors of poetry, prose or drama who have subsequently become recognised within the canon. Meanwhile, once publication of the second volume had been taken over by Harihar Śarmā, it was not surprising that as well as adding occasional illustrations and dramatically redesigning the cover, he should include some advertising.<sup>128</sup> His techniques appear to have had some success: *Sundarī*'s initial print run of 600 stabilised during the first year at 500, but increased to 1,000 copies throughout its second volume (*SP*). Evidence—such as the names of donors or contributors to *samasyāpūrti* competitions, and the reports on Sanskrit *pāṭhśālās* and meetings of *paṇḍits*—suggests that the primary audience of *Sundarī* consisted of highly educated Brāhmaṇs who would respond to its taste for literature

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<sup>127</sup> News was not limited to either India or Nepal, as the wide range of topics covered in 2(4) demonstrate: a report on Chandra Śamśer's return from his visit to Britain and France, local news within Nepal from Dailekh, Bāṃke, Bhojpur, and Kathmandu, reports on equal rights for women in German universities, budget cuts by the Japanese government, a remarkable child who has walked from Toronto to New York, Chinese restrictions on opium use, the proposed establishment of a telephone link between Paris and New York, public wrestling and games in Baroda, and a paragraph on sealing holes in steel dishes borrowed from the *Gorkhāpatra* (this latter apparently a topic of enduring interest: almost ten years later a similar article appeared in *Chandra* (1(5): 11-12)).

<sup>128</sup> Thus 2(5) devotes its final two pages to informing readers of his business's expansion to Calcutta (he uses the English 'branch office') and promoting various *kasturī* medicinal products.

adorned by *alankār*. Nevertheless, it raised a call to arms for the formation of social solidarity, replete from the opening issue with invocations to ‘our country brothers’ and exhortations for language development and social progress that announced intentions beyond the purely literary. While generally—apart from its promotion of *svadeśī* ideals—avoiding overtly political topics, it engaged in social commentary and laid the basis for public discussion of *unnati* with contributions such as ‘Deśko unnati’ (2(5): 24-26, reproduced from *Gorkhāpatra*), even if their outlook was more likely to be broadly moral—‘if you wish to achieve *unnati* for yourself in this world first make sure your offspring are good ...’ (2(7): 1)—than suggestive of radical social reform.

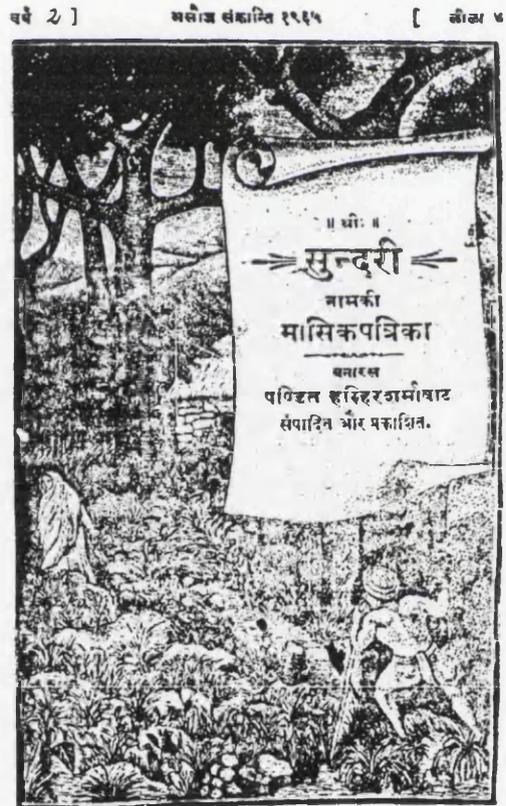
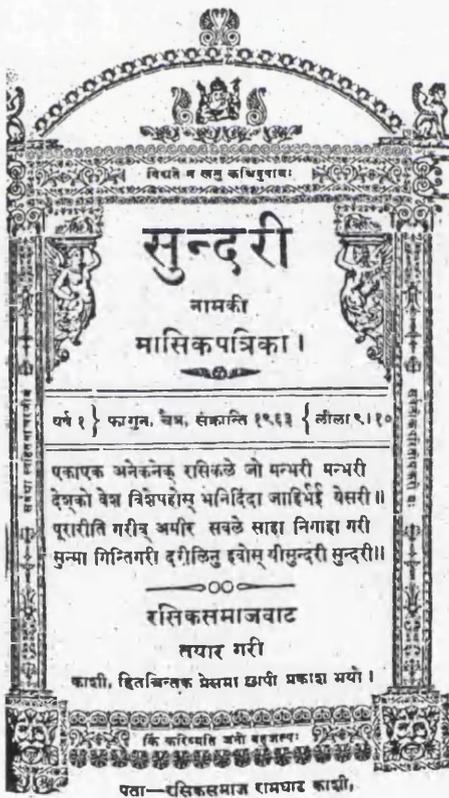


Figure 3-1 Techniques developed in populist publishing made their impact on highbrow publications. When Harihar Śarmā took over as editor and publisher of the literary journal *Sundarī* in 1908, he gave the cover design a dramatic makeover. The later version is on the right; apart from featuring new artwork, it displays his name prominently.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Harihar’s assistance to *Sundarī*, taking it over because the Rasik Samāj was incapable of financing it, was satirised in *Mādhavī* (6-8: 154-56), with *Sundarī* portrayed as a helpless, destitute girl, and

This chapter's central sections focus on the journals *Chandra* and *Chandrikā* for a number of reasons. They represent Banaras and Darjeeling, and had contributors from various locations in India and Nepal; they appeared at an early stage in the period under consideration and the debate they contain is in many ways foundational, setting the framework for subsequent discourse; the discussion they present on topics examined by this chapter is typical of the range to be found in later journals and thus reasonably representative of a wider tranche of discourse. For example, Lakṣmīkānta Ārjyāl's (1918: 13) identification of the purpose of *Chandrikā* as being *unnati* of the *mātr̥bhāṣā* emphasises the centrality of the themes examined in this chapter. Pārasmaṇi himself later wrote that 'the main aim of the monthly *Chandrikā* was to bring about *unnati* of the Nepali language and uniformity in language' (cited in Pradhān 1991: 49). In the opening editorial of *Chandrikā* (1918a: 1), Pārasmaṇi had stated that the journal would 'devote body, mind and money (*tan, man, dhan*) to the service of its *deś, jāti* and vernacular literature'; these intentions were discussed at length in the subsequent editorial article 'Necessity' (1918b).<sup>130</sup> *Chandra* was similarly explicit in its aims: alongside a poem on developing the mother tongue (3.3), the masthead features a separate verse which describes the journal as 'letting a stream of joy flow forth and teaching the knowledge of learning and art'.<sup>131</sup> Last but not least, concentrating on two early periodicals is one way of narrowing down an

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Harihar (clearly identifiable although unnamed) as a 'rich and meritorious gentleman' of dubious motives.

<sup>130</sup> Both of these contributions are reproduced in full in Pradhān (1991: 52-55).

<sup>131</sup> Despite their noble aims these two journals, like *Sundarī* before them, were not entirely detached from the commercial themes examined in Chapter 1.3. While providing a platform for high-minded discourse, they both saw to it to promote their more profitable sister-ventures. Thus the inside cover of the first issue of *Chandra* tells readers that 'all kinds of Hindi novels and other Hindi books as well as all kinds of Kashi goods are available from our factory: cheap price and honest work will be done (*sasto dām ra satyatāko kām*)'. Readers were invited to write to the *Chandra* office in Dharmakūp with a reply postcard for all sorts of information about Kashi. Applicants would doubtless have received an envelope stuffed with product promotions: later covers advertise the expected popular remedies, such as 'bhāskar lavaṇ', a magical cure for all stomach ailments in young and old however chronic (issue 8), while issue 10 features a new range of medicines from Calcutta. Likewise, *Chandrikā* cross-promoted the Hari Printing Press, with adverts for the press and its products, such as (2(2): 67-68) the books *Mahākāl jāsūs*, *Dhruva charitra*, *Bilāyat yātrā*, and *Nepālī vyākaraṇ*, each described briefly in glowing and exciting terms. Would-be customers are advised to contact the press or—in much bigger type—to write directly to Pārasmaṇi in Kalimpong: despite his disgust at their venality, he was quick to adopt the promotional techniques of the Banaras publisher-impresarios.

otherwise vast range of fairly similar contributions. References to writings appearing elsewhere are still essential but as far as possible they are confined to footnotes.

As the discussion of the patchy history of journal development above has hinted, the irregular appearance of Nepali journals meant that they could hardly supply the 'simultaneity' of experience shared by a scattered newspaper community as envisaged by Anderson (1991). Nevertheless, they contributed to a sense of Nepali community and they increasingly furnished that community with critical reasoning of the sort that had emerged from salon and coffee-house culture to penetrate the European daily press in the first half of the eighteenth century (cf. Habermas 1989: 25, 31-43, 59-60). Europe was an obvious source of inspiration to Indian publishers and journalists, and Nepali efforts fell within a tradition of the discursive vernacular press that dated, in Hindi, to the 1870s. Thus Pārasmaṇi's words cited at the head of this section echo those of Hariśchandra (from his 1884 speech 'Bhāratvarṣ kī unnati kaise ho saktī hai', translated and cited in Dalmia 1997: 23):

In England even the coachmen read newspapers. No sooner does the master descend from the coach to visit a friend, than the coachman draws out the newspaper from under his seat. The coachman here would smoke his water pipe and indulge in gossip. And that gossip would also be idle. The people there talk of *deś ke prabandh*, administrative measures of state, even when they gossip.<sup>132</sup>

Such sentiments spread among the Nepali intelligentsia and influenced their perception of the value of periodicals. Thus Indramān Vaidya's 'The necessity of reading newspapers' offered an idealistic assessment of the role newspapers could play in spreading awareness and reforming society.<sup>133</sup> His article is a well-structured survey, opening with a general description of newspapers, their different types and their history in India starting with Warren Hastings and the first Bengali papers: 'nowadays with the propagation and influence of learning various newspapers in different languages have spread across all of India, and are spreading day by day' (1918: 21). He sees newspapers as a means to reform various social practices and as the primary means for uplifting one's *jāti*, for which the

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<sup>132</sup> Dalmia's extended analysis of Hariśchandra's viewpoint on *unnati* (1997: 21-27) is well worth consulting for its relevance to similar Nepali discourse.

<sup>133</sup> Vaidya, a doctor who practised in Kathmandu's Bir Hospital, became best known for his medical works in Nepali, dating from the mid-1930s to 1970 (Bhaṭṭarāi 1999/2000: 77).

progress of ‘our neighbouring Bengali brothers’ since they have educated themselves in politics, etc., is more than enough evidence (*ibid.*: 22). He further praises newspapers for disseminating knowledge, acting as a medium for expressing the people’s wishes to parliament, providing businessmen with an essential medium for advancing trade, and so forth. Later writers have picked up on some of these wider issues in relation to Nepali journals. For example, Dillīrāj Śarmā (1995/96a: 60) notes that publications from India gave a boost to the development of the Nepali language within Nepal as well, and helped to bring about ‘an awakening of the need to protect *jātitva*’. Yet the actual content of journals has received scant attention, with textual attention generally paid only to a few high-profile sample articles by renowned authors. In the preface to his collection of three major essays on Nepalis in Darjeeling, Pradhān (1982) had noted that a fourth essay on ‘our old journals’ should have been included but had to be postponed due to the difficulty of procuring materials on the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*. Most writers have not even proceeded that far. The materials examined in the following sections should thus shed light on the functioning of Nepali journals and their role in shaping an influential class of discourse and debate.

### **3.2. The urge for upliftment**

#### *3.2.1. The rhetoric of vidyā and unnati*

The keywords *vidyā* and *unnati* were not new when they first came to characterise a variety of twentieth century arguments, propositions and tenets of social reform. The fact that both words are Sanskrit imbues them with two significant properties: they have a degree of historical legitimacy and association with traditional modes of learning and morality, and they could also be shared by a number of South Asian languages. Thus from the outset we must remember that their initial deployment in Nepali discourse, and the range of connotations they assume, was conditioned by both their usage in Sanskrit and their more recent employment in, for example, Bengali and Hindi writing (as exemplified by Hariśchandra’s speech cited in the previous section).

However, this chapter examines specifically how early Nepali writers chose to develop these themes and valorise their terminology. To do this we must allow many samples of contemporary prose and poetry to speak for themselves. It is important here to be precise

about the appropriateness and limitations of English translations of *vidyā* and *unnati*. For example, Onta mistranslates *vidyā* as ‘knowledge’ (1996a: *passim*, e.g. 44, 46) and this mistranslation undermines his analysis. In fact, *vidyā* carries a more specific range of meaning: the knowledge implied by *vidyā* is not the same as *jñān* which may be inborn or derived from direct sensual experience.<sup>134</sup> *Vidyā* is acquired as an exercise of academic application, be it within a situation of formal schooling or within individual practice of an educational discipline. Thus while *jñān* can refer to knowledge of indeterminate origin, *vidyā* speaks to us specifically of *learning*: knowledge which can only be gained by dedicated and conscious devotion to some method of instruction or self-instruction.<sup>135</sup> Not least, as we shall see below, this assigns for *vidyā* a natural role within socially determined structures of education and morality.<sup>136</sup> I shall translate *vidyā* as ‘learning’ consistently throughout this chapter.

*Unnati*, alongside the related participle *unnat*, is the key to the concept of ‘self-improvement’.<sup>137</sup> *Unnat* is defined by the Royal Nepal Academy’s authoritative dictionary (Pokharel 1983/84: 149) as ‘risen upward, tall, high’ while *unnati* is ‘the condition, action or quality of being *unnat*’ with a secondary meaning of ‘industry undertaken in any task or field; effort; occupation’.<sup>138</sup> Thus *unnati* denotes primarily the *state* of being arisen or uplifted, rather than the *process* of upliftment (which is better represented by *unnayan*, a word which appears to be entirely absent from this discourse).<sup>139</sup> In English it may be

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<sup>134</sup> Standard dictionary definitions (Pokharel 1983/84: 508, 1220) help to clarify the distinction. *Jñān* can refer to awareness of any subject, worldly or heavenly, knowledge gained from the *sāstras* or the direct experiences of the senses. *Vidyā*, however, is primarily defined as ‘the knowledge achieved from educational institutions or self-study; the awareness (*buddhi*) earned from education’.

<sup>135</sup> He does, however, at one point (1996a: 48) refer to ‘the pursuit of learning and knowledge’.

<sup>136</sup> In fact, this accords with Onta’s comments (1996a: 67) on *jāti* activists’ relationship to ‘formal academy’: his mistranslation is here at odds with his own analysis. We may also note that the Nepali for ‘school’ is *vidyālaya*, ‘abode of learning’; similarly *viśvavidyālaya* translates ‘university’.

<sup>137</sup> Strangely, Onta (1996c) makes no direct reference to *unnati*, although it surely underlies his use of ‘improvement’.

<sup>138</sup> The secondary meaning has particular significance for a strand of discourse on industry which is examined in 3.4. The original Sanskrit is translated as ‘rising, ascending, swelling up; elevation, height; increase, advancement, prosperity’ (Monier Williams 1899: 193).

<sup>139</sup> Claiming that a term is absent from an entire range of discourse is more risky than arguing for presence, where a single reference will suffice to prove the point. I should simply state as qualification that the limits of my reading are clear from the bibliography and that any statement of absence of a word or phrase from this corpus is based on close and careful reading but is not infallible.

rendered as 'progress', 'development' or 'advancement', but here is left untranslated throughout. However, *vidyā* and *unnati* were not mere words but represented high ideals, their use invoking the power and purity of an ideal vision. This added layer of value is clear in countless writings, such as Darbar School teacher Paṇḍit Harināth Śarmā Khanāl's poem 'Education' (1915a: 8), which displays a typically reverential attitude towards *vidyā*.<sup>140</sup>

विद्या बड़ो बस्तु छ बाबु ! जान  
विद्या नभै केहि हुँदैँन काम ।  
विद्या समान्को अरु चीज छैन  
विद्या नभै सभ्य कहाउँदैँन ।

Learning is a great thing, child! Know that  
without learning no task is accomplished.  
Nothing else is equal to learning; without  
learning one could not be called civilised.<sup>141</sup>

By the time of *Chandrikā* almost three years later the eulogistic intensity of such rhetoric had if anything increased, as is well illustrated a few sentences from Śeṣ Maṇi's essay 'Vidyā' (1918a: 16), which describes learning as 'a priceless gem': 'An effect like that of the moon falls on the country which is resplendent with learned people. For however dark the night, the moon makes it bright with its cool rays. A country full of people deprived of learning gives the impression of a night without the moon.' Of course, Pradhān's choice of analogy was also conditioned by its relevance to the title of the new journal (*Chandrikā* meaning 'moon'), and his 'country of deprived people' was a not very oblique political comment on the unenlightened Rāṇā regime. Yet many more poets were ready to try their hand at flowery encomiums to the age's pre-eminent ideal. For example,

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It is also important at this stage to distinguish *unnati* from similar terms, such as *utthān* ('upliftment') and *pragati* ('progress'). These latter are both common in current discourse but again conspicuous by their absence from writings of the 1910s to 1930s. The same can be said for *vikās* ('development'), ubiquitous in Nepali national rhetoric since the Panchayat period (see Onta's chapter 'Dispersing *Rastriya Itihas*: Bravery in a *Bikas* State', 1996c: 254-97, esp. 268 fn. 16, and Pauḍel (1997) on contemporary *vikās* rhetoric) but also hardly featuring in early journals (one rare agentive usage is Tārānāth Śarmā's 'Science is the developer (*vikāśak*) of our intellect', C1(11): 5). *Sudhār* ('improvement, reform') is more frequently encountered in the sense of both social reform and practical development, as in the title of Śeṣ Maṇi's monthly *Gāuṃ Sudhār Patrikā* ('Village Reform Journal', Kalimpong, June 1939-May 1940).

<sup>140</sup> He resurfaces with similar sentiments on education two issues later with the poem 'Śikṣāṣṭak' (Khanāl 1915b).

<sup>141</sup> The idea that lack of learning could be equated to lack of humanity (cf. fn. 66) was a recurrent theme, well exemplified by 'Vidyā Pañchak' (C2(7): 158), the work of an unnamed student from Kalimpong: 'Know that people accomplished in learning are rich/people without learning are equal to beasts/People in whom there is learning are called wise/people without learning are counted among the beasts...'

the sentiments of the typical doggerel verse ‘Vidyā’ (Dīpakeśvar Śarmā 1918b: 7) shine through its clumsily contrived rhymes:<sup>142</sup>

विद्या नै हो विभव भव को छैन विद्या समान ।  
आर्को केही पनी सुजन हो ! हुन्छ यस्ले सुमान ॥

Learning truly is might; the world has  
nothing else equal to learning. O gentlemen!  
Honour comes from it.

विद्या को नै समय गति ले गर्नु नै पर्छ सेवा ।  
विद्या दिन्छे बिलल यश का स्तम्भ मा टम्म टेवा ॥

The passing of time must serve learning  
indeed; learning gives a firm support on the  
column of pure glory.

...

...

विद्या भन्दा अधिक भव मा नाम को काम छैन ।  
हाहा ! विद्या अलिकति नभै हुन्न है हुन्न चैन ॥

There is nothing in the world worth more  
than learning. Haha! One must have a bit of  
learning or there’ll be no pleasure.

यौटा विद्यालय कँहि खुलोस् ज्ञान को बगुँ धारा ।  
भन्ने सम्झी कन पनी कुनै दिन्न केही सहारा ॥

Let a school open somewhere and the fount  
of knowledge will flow—yet even knowing  
this no one gives any support.

The poem continues to urge ‘*vidyā*-loving gentlemen’ to support the spread of learning, even if it is only by establishing a small library. Such laudatory verse and prose could become repetitious and tedious: however high the sentiments that inspired them, there is no evidence that predictable and often patronisingly didactic lectures on the merits of *vidyā* engrossed their audience. After many similar offerings, for example, it is hard to imagine *Chandrikā*’s readership being thrilled by the dense description of *vidyā* dished up by Rāmchandra Upādhyāya of Sirāhā (1918: 14): ‘Everyone has two eyes but the learned have three eyes. Learning is the home of government, the glory of the family; in the absence of jewels learning herself takes on the form of ornamentation for the learned...’<sup>143</sup> Just as *vidyā* itself could be idealised, so could those who worked for its spread and progress. For example, *Chandrikā* (1(7): 21) mourns the death of the owner and manager of the Bombay’s Nirṇaysāgar Press (which had printed several Nepali books), describing him as

<sup>142</sup> Dīpakeśvar Śarmā (1896/97-1972/73), also known as Lohanī, was a long term employee of the private Bir Library in Kathmandu (Śarmā (1994/95: 61), Bhaṭṭarāī (1988/89: 392)). The attribution of this poem is uncertain; other poems of his that appeared in *Chandrikā* (e.g. 1918a, 1918c) were reprinted from *Gorkhālī*.

<sup>143</sup> This contribution also appears under the simple title of ‘Vidyā’. The most famous essay sharing this title is probably that of Pārasmaṇi in *Chandra* (Pradhān 1915b), written while he was still a schoolboy. As this essay has been reproduced elsewhere (Pradhān 1974: 108-12) and also previously discussed by Onta (1996a: 46, 1996c: 160-61), it is not revisited here.

an ‘ideal propagator of learning (*ādarsa vidyāprachārak*)’. In his essay ‘Good character is the root of *unnati*’, Maṅsiṃh Guruṅ (1918a: 11) developed this point, proposing not only that learning is an essential precondition for full humanity but that wider progress will be impossible without the birth of ‘ideal men’:<sup>144</sup>

No one is worthy of being called a person just by virtue of being born from a human womb. To be called a person it is utterly essential to take up education and make oneself of good character. Without attaining education true humanity cannot be attained and thus right from childhood it is the duty of the human being alone to gain education ... As for eliminating the bad character of society, until ideal men (*ādarsapurūṣ*) arise there can be no kind of *unnati* ... only we lack the desire to achieve an advanced condition (*unnatāvasthā*), the power to adopt the behaviour of the great souls of previous times and the intelligence to save ourselves from the wrong path and set us walking on the right path.

Guruṅ’s sentiments also alert us to the intertwining of social upliftment with a broadly conservative moral outlook, an aspect of this discourse which is examined in 3.4. *Vidyā* was a somewhat abstract ideal but the term could adopt scientific or practical connotations, with learning viewed as a more straightforward knowledge based on natural criteria rather than spiritual or moral authority. It is to such an empirical *vidyā* that the unsigned essay ‘Protection of health or care for freedom from disease’ appealed. However, even acknowledgement of the benefits of modern scientific study is tempered by comparison to a pre-modern golden age of freedom from disease (*Chandra* 1(3): 15-16):

Health learning (*svāstha vidyā*) is that learning through which a person can keep themselves in the finest condition and can remain alive for a very long time. To be complete in this learning it is extremely important to know physical, botanical and chemical sciences (*śāstra*), etc. In ancient times when the number of people was low they used to remain far apart. Their behaviour was straightforward (*chāl dhāl sīdhā sādthā thiyō*) and at that time there were many means of keeping people free from illness and strong as if from nature’s generosity.

Writing later, ‘Prabhākar’ (1918: 3) turned to a new classification of academic disciplines to invoke numerous types of *vidyā*:

O best of scholars! Whatever form of learning you have gained please write it in the mother tongue and teach it to our juniors who are our hope for the future. Only if you write books on all subjects—political learning, scientific learning (*viññān vidyā*), agricultural learning, economics or business learning, etc.—can our *unnati* take place quickly. This is the time, let it not be allowed to pass by ... while there exist servants of the country (*deśsevak*) such

<sup>144</sup> The longevity of similar views and rhetoric is well illustrated by the opening sentence of a much later portrait of a contributor to Indian Nepali society. Pathik’s description (1981: 71) of Maṅkisan Pradhān (1900-1962) starts by addressing such categories: ‘Not only do world famous great men (*mahāpurūṣharū*) have a role in the world’s *unnati* but so also do those servants of society who work in small areas inspired by a desire to help others (*paropakārko bhāvanā*).’

as yourselves, lovers of learning, great men who relieve sorrows (*duḥkhamochak mahāpuruṣ*), how can you watch the troubles of our brothers who are about to die having fallen into the deep, dark well of non-learning?

Whether abstract or concrete, *vidyā* is rarely mentioned without some accompanying reference to *unnati*, and frequently also to education as the primary means of achieving *unnati*. A typical juxtaposition of these three key words can be seen in the essay ‘The necessity for propagation of learning’ by Achyutānanda Śreṣṭha of Calcutta. Following a fairly standard lament on the poor state of learning in ‘our society’ (1918: 2), he wrote positively—not to say somewhat sycophantically—about the situation in Nepal now that Chandra Śamser had encouraged some growth of education: ‘Day and night you are seeing that educated men of learning are making extraordinary *unnati* in every task through the power of their learning and the power of their intellect. It is more than I can do to demonstrate the qualities of *vidyā* and describe the qualities of *sikṣā*’.<sup>145</sup> While it is clear that there is a firm linkage between *vidyā* and *unnati*, it is not always evident what the relationship is. The constant echoing of these terms reinforces a sense of their inherent validity but does not necessarily clarify how they fit together: is it *unnati in* learning, learning *for unnati*, or simply learning *and unnati*? Certainly at times it would appear that learning and education become not the means to the end of *unnati* but rather an end in themselves. Hence Bhaṭṭa’s reference (1918: 12) to ‘the *unnati* of learning’: ‘almost everyone knows that the glory of learning is beyond description but I am boldly stating how its *unnati* should be’. And a later issue of *Chandrikā* (1(10-11): inside frontispiece) brought news of ‘*unnati* of education in the kingdom of Nepal’ under the title ‘Joyful News’.

However, alongside the dominance of these rhetorical constellations lay the danger of words becoming hollow slogans. This risk was incisively demonstrated by the contemporary commentator ‘Phattya’ of Nepal, whose essay ‘Unnati’ pulled no punches as it railed against the unthinking repetition of empty words. He observed that the cry of *unnati* could be heard all over India and now also from the mouths of some ‘Gorkhali brothers’. But he was sceptical (1918a: 9): ‘can it be that one experiences delight just from

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<sup>145</sup> In fact, the qualities of *sikṣā* had already received lengthy treatment by earlier writers, such as Dharmadatta Śarmā in *Mādhavī* (1(4): 70-76).

pronouncing this word?’ He suggested that if this was the sole purpose, then those who cried ‘unnati, unnati’ might as well choose a more satisfying bird call such as ‘cock-a-doodle-doo’. He joked that if canaries and bulbuls could be bought in the bazaar for a few rupees then one could only guess at the price of a bird that could manage no more than the miserable three-and-a-half characters of ‘unnati’.<sup>146</sup> Phattya was in no doubt (*ibid.*: 9-10) that an obvious and repetitious verbal commitment to *unnati* made for neither good poetry nor positive action:

Dear, respected readers! I am no enemy of *unnati* nor indeed is it my aim that there should never be any advanced work (*unnatkārya*) and that there should always be a state of decline (*avanati*); however words can only ever be an indication of action as they can never take on the form of action themselves. It would appear very difficult for *unnati* to be achieved by writing little essays and a handful of poems with the word ‘unnati’ inserted in a couple of places. In my humble opinion there will only be *unnati* if the intelligent, wise gentlemen who understand the essence of *unnati* dedicate themselves also to *unnati* in mind, word and deed with firm resolve and make the effort to direct everyone onto the path of *unnati* through the use of books—of educational value, or vernacular translations of our old masters’ books—which they can produce in the time [currently] given to praising the word ‘unnati’.

His analysis demonstrates the sophistication and self-awareness of certain contemporary participants in debate, and specifically the fact that the discourse of *unnati* had at an early stage become an object of analysis and interpretation in its own right. As we have now seen, journals such as *Chandrikā* published several articles with the title ‘Unnati’: this contribution of Phattya’s demonstrates the risk of assuming that similarly titled essays contain similar opinions. In fact, this is just one of a number of carefully reasoned and forcefully expressed rejections of pervasive assumptions about *unnati* and the means of achieving it.<sup>147</sup>

To conclude this presentation of discursive themes related to *vidyā* and *unnati*, we may briefly consider some interesting aspects of the play *Vidyāsundar* by Śambhuprasād Dhunṅyāl, which appeared serially in *Chandrikā*.<sup>148</sup> This drama takes a traditional format, opening with a *maṅgalapāṭha* followed by the entry of the *sūtradhār*. It is immediately

<sup>146</sup> The conjunct second character of उन्नति (*u-nna-ti*) is counted as one-and-a-half characters.

<sup>147</sup> A further important dissenting voice was that of Śrīmatī Kumudīnī (1918), whose argument is introduced in 4.4.2.

<sup>148</sup> Pārasmaṇi subsequently drew heavily on this play for his *Sundar kumār*, first performed at the opening of the Gorkha Library in Kurseong, as he acknowledges in his introduction to the published text (1920: 2).

clear from his soliloquy that the drama is going to be used as a didactic vehicle for conveying and reinforcing some of the increasingly dominant high culture views on *vidyā*, *unnati*, and the root of social ills. However predictable some of the opinions expressed—and however stilted some of the monologue and dialogue becomes under the weight of its worthy message—this short play also introduces a wider vision of *unnati* than many other poems and essays. The *sūtradhār*'s initial speech bemoans the lack of interest in drama and warns of wider effects: 'From this not only will our mother tongue remain in decline but rather our society too will fall downwards' (1918c: 9). His complaints continue for a full page before he turns specifically to the situation of literature and drama. He assigns to literature a fundamental role in national upliftment around the world and further characterises drama by two potentially conflicting profiles. It is, for him (*ibid.*: 10), a classical format which 'at one time' enjoyed a golden age from which it has now fallen and at the same time it is a vehicle for contemporary, globally aware social transformation:

'In the world at whatever time and in whichever country there has been *unnati* it has all taken place because of literature. But alas! It is a matter of immeasurable shame and sorrow that drama, the chief branch of literature which at one time in this country surpassed the boundary of *unnati* and had made itself the preceptor of all lands, should today be in such a miserable state ... [*looking all around him*] Look, apart from drama there is no other means by which a current picture of the state of society (*samājīk dasā*) can be shown to the general public and thereby be fully reformed.'

These twin aspects of retrospective and prospective inspiration—discussed in the final section of this chapter—are recurrent features of the entire discourse of social improvement. Meanwhile, the *sūtradhār* confers with an actress over the most appropriate play to present. This is a decision that must be taken with consideration for both the patron and the audience: as he reminds his colleague, 'thanks to our fate, today our most honourable government has given the order to play a drama in the Nepali language' (*ibid.*: 10). *Vidyāsundar* is, conveniently enough, ideally suited to both of these parties to the production. The sanction of the *sarkār* (lord or government) reinforces the impression of *vidyā* being dispensed from on high, by the grace of and at the pleasure of rulers, while the audience can look forward to being educated. As the *sūtradhār* comments (*ibid.*: 11) when the actress comes up with this suggestion: 'Good, our government has also given permission to perform this very play; watching it, society will understand the true importance of learning, pay respect to it and work for the *unnati* of their own country and

society.’ Indeed, the subject matter of the play is concerned with kings rather than subjects; again the traditional format brings us traditional *dramatis personae*. As the first act opens a downcast king enters followed by his *mantrī* (minister) and *vidūṣaka* (jester). It transpires that the king cannot find a suitable groom for his daughter Vidyāvātī (‘learned’, literally a woman possessed of *vidyā*). Of course, the crux of the king’s problem (*ibid.*: 15) relates to *vidyā*:

Has the name of learning disappeared without trace from the world? For many great princes and many great *sāstrīs* have come but not one of them has any learning. The sons of kings seem to be being born into royal lineage only by the power of some merit earned in previous births, the *sāstrīs* ... are each and every one of them stupid. A pox on princes! A pox on *paṇḍits*! Really they’re all just beasts, except that even beasts have distinctive qualities which they lack!

Eventually the *mantrī* says that he has heard that the son of the king of Kāñchīpurī is young, handsome, well educated and has defeated many *paṇḍits* in *sāstrārtha* (doctrinal debate). Most importantly, he is said to be *vidyāsīl* (disposed to learning) by nature (*ibid.*: 17). As the play continues in the next issue there is further lengthy discussion of how to test the suitability of the potential groom as a match for such a well-educated bride (*ibid.*: 21-24). These exchanges allow for plenty of couplets on the merits of *vidyā*. Eventually the prince Sundar is summoned to the king’s own city and left waiting in a delightful garden; he looks around in amazement (*ibid.*: 28) at what must be the epitome of a city made beautiful by *vidyā*:

‘Could there be a more beautiful garden than this in the world? [looking towards the city] Aha! I see that the splendour of this growing city is even greater than the descriptions that I had heard ... what beautiful houses are built here, what an elegant alignment! How captivating the arrangement of broad, beautiful and clean roads! Aha! Over there what growth of commerce! The crowd of buyers and sellers gives the impression of an extraordinary festival. Aha! How the shops arrayed with all sorts of goods draw one’s attention. All the people can be seen busy at their own work ... from place to place watchmen are carefully sounding the hour. The subjects are spending their time happily. Certainly the king of this place is fortunate.’

This is a striking summation of the vision of progress through learning. It represents an ideal awe-inspiring enough to render even an eloquent prince almost speechless yet the benefits showcased are concrete. While the scene could be one of a timeless golden age the praise for cleanliness and order, and above all the bustling business of a flourishing market economy, hint at more modern and material aspirations.

### 3.2.2. The sense of backwardness

हाम्रा समाजमा विद्याको त्यतिकै अभाव छ जतिको एक दरिद्रलाई धनको ... यो अभाव हरेक विचारशील सज्जनहरूलाई मालुमै छ। यस तिर हाम्रा जन समाजबाट अझ सम्म उचित रीति संग ध्यान गयेको छैन। यो अत्यन्त दुःखको बिषय हो! हाम्रा समाजमा विद्याको न्यूनता देखेर हिन्दुस्थानको अन्य जातिका मानिसहरू, हामीहरूलाई मूर्ख अथवा जंगली (असभ्य) भन्दछन्। जुन समय यो कटुवचन हिन्दुस्थानी भाईहरूका मुखदेखि सुन्दछौं, त्यस समय हामीहरू उनीहरूलाई उपयुक्त केही उत्तर दिनु सक्दैनौं; कारण हामीहरू उनीहरूको समान छैनौं।

*Our society lacks learning as a poor person lacks money ... every thoughtful gentleman is aware of this. Our society at large has yet to pay appropriate attention to this, which is very sad. Seeing the lack of learning in our society, people of other jātis call us stupid or savage (uncivilised). And when we hear these harsh words from the mouths of our Indian brothers we are unable to give them any fitting answer for we are not equal to them.*

Achyutānanda Śreṣṭha (1918: 2)

Dreams of a prosperous modernity were not fuelled solely by appeals to images of a classical civilisation or an idealised future. More important was a pervasive negative sense of backwardness in relation to other countries and other Indian communities. As Onta (1996a: 46) puts it with regard to Pārasmani, ‘In these two essays [‘Perseverance’ and ‘Vidyā’, both published in *Chandra*<sup>149</sup>] Parasmani demonstrated that his world was an already calibrated set of countries which had recorded differential progress’. Although this awareness of disparity in progress was present in *Chandra*, it was more fully elaborated in *Chandrikā*. In its opening issue Jit Bahādur Mukhiyā of Ranchi (1(1): 23)<sup>150</sup> was brutal: ‘Wandering in the market, people of other castes look at you [Gorkhalis] and laugh. And how could they fail to? You haven’t got a clue about studying and you don’t even know how to behave in others’ lands’. Writing from Shillong, Maṇisimh Guruṅ (1918a: 12) dwelled on the negative perceptions of Nepalis as a motivation for reform: ‘when we attain success in reforming our characters then those who now look on us with contempt will honour us for our good character’. He called upon all readers, whatever their background, to recognise their responsibility to society as a whole by joining the struggle to gain respectability through learning.

<sup>149</sup> Both ‘Vidyā’ (fn. 143) and ‘Perseverance’ (Pradhān 1991: 9-13) have recently been reprinted.

<sup>150</sup> According to an editorial note, his essay could not be printed in its entirety due to lack of space: it is presented as a summary, and his original words may have been subject to some editing.

*Chandrikā* carried many such despairing ‘why oh why’ articles characterised by recurrent idioms—apparently inspired by the editor’s personal register—such as ‘what a pity’, ‘what sadness’, ‘Alas!’ and ‘Shame!’. However, writers chose different targets to blame, from ordinary people to arrogant *paṇḍits*. Here again we find that while authors propose similar remedies in a shared rhetoric, their identification of problems was disparate. One common feature, though, was a sense of despair among the educated elite for their feckless and ignorant lower class fellow Nepalis, an attitude typified by Mīn Bahādur Bhaṭṭa (1918: 11) of the Darbar School in Nepal:

Alas! Our countrymen ... absorbed in this dark world are wasting their lives away. If at the present time it appears that we are not showing compassion when we witness this state of affairs it is because some of our brothers say, ‘in studying our effort knows no bounds, not to speak of the expenditure, but whether rich or poor, without money there’s no way we can give education even within the home let alone outside’ and so on. Pah!

Śeṣ Maṇi, also writing as a member of the educational establishment, attempted to demonstrate that even humble peasants could benefit from basic literacy. Yet he was scathing and bitterly sarcastic in his criticism of Nepali society’s aversion to acquiring the simplest of knowledge.<sup>151</sup> Striking a more political note, he also linked lack of education to susceptibility to colonial subjection when he related (1918a: 16-17) how a cowherd managed to save his life by being able to write a very simple letter asking his family to send him food as he was starving in the high pastures: ‘But alas! Most members of our Gorkha society will not even have studied the basic characters of the alphabet.’<sup>152</sup> ...These idiots, without understanding the idea of learning (*vidyā ko buddhi*) see railways, ships, the telegraph, gramophones, telephones and so forth and say “The English are gods”.’ His conclusion (*ibid.*: 17) is less striking—others also contrast the renown earned by brave Gorkha exploits to the infamy of continued ignorance—but illustrates the frustration faced

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<sup>151</sup> Despite the dominance of harsh language on this topic, backwardness could also be presented humorously—although still patronisingly—as in the brief ‘A laughing matter’ (*Chandra* 1(7): 12). Here two rustic types discuss how electricity works: one explains authoritatively that a large fire is lit in Pharping and transmitted through the wire to Kathmandu by burning kerosene. This is immediately followed by ‘Gramophone’, a similar comic dialogue from Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā (*Chandra* 1(7): 13). Indeed, twelve years later Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān himself, writing in his journal *Ādarśa* (1930b: 25), had tempered his frustration with humour: ‘even in this twentieth century the grown children of our society can see a lit candle and say “Wow! So bananas can also burn like this!”...’

<sup>152</sup> The letter was written in *sāuṃ akṣar* - the fundamental *devanāgarī* characters without the addition of vowel *mātrās* or conjunct consonants.

by educated Nepalis in trying to broaden the horizons of more traditional members of their society: ‘the majority of the brave Gorkha *jāti* in India do not understand the influence of education: they repeat “what’s the point of reading and counting—we just plough and eat our rice” and they carry on their work according to this saying’.<sup>153</sup>

Indeed, the disparity between Gorkha physical strength and mental feebleness was the starting point for the Kurseong Gorkha Library’s first appeal for funds (C1(1): 18).<sup>154</sup>

There is not the slightest doubt that the physical prowess of the Gorkha subjects is laudable but a people as lacking and corrupted in mental power as the Gorkhas would be hard to find in this land. In whichever country one turns one’s gaze the resounding drumbeat that is the auspicious indicator of *unnati* and a higher station (*pad*) can be heard. But alas! We Gorkha subjects have not the least desire for this. Hundreds of thousands of Gorkhalis are passing their days in the service of other castes. Day by day one can see them come forward to wash the *dhotīs* and saris of the *ajāt* for the sake of their stomachs.<sup>155</sup> And as if that was not enough they have also taken to all sorts of low business (*nīch karmma*).

The themes of this appeal are typical, although its equation of ignorance with abasement through humiliating work for those beyond the pale of the caste system sounds a potentially discordant note: learning may raise all of Nepali society to a level of equality with other Indian communities, but it can equally be used to maintain a caste hierarchy advantageous only to some Nepalis. One senses that the desire of the few to uplift the many is fuelled partly by the fear of a failure that sees the educated elite also dragged down into the ignominy of the masses’ servitude. Jit Bahādur Mukhiyā (C1(1): 23) reinforced the caste point a few pages later: ‘Nowadays all you Gorkhalis are abandoning your own country thinking that you will enjoy happiness in another state; but looking round carefully, one only sees you spending your days in the service of others. Only serving the low castes, washing their *dhotīs* and saris and cleaning their dirty dishes (what sorrow!!!) seems to suit you’. One year later, an appeal on behalf of Darjeeling’s Gorkhā Samiti (C2(4): 116-17) observed the same contrast between bravery and ignorance: ‘During the war which shook the world over the last years, recognising qualities such as the bravery, valour and patience of the Gorkhas the British and Nepal governments bestowed great honours on many

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<sup>153</sup> This saying (‘*padhyo guṇyo kyā ho kām halo jotyo khāyo mām*’) was reportedly repeated to Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān by his step-mother and neighbours when he insisted on going to school (Kārthak 2001: 17).

<sup>154</sup> On this and other library projects see 4.3.2.

<sup>155</sup> On *jāt* and *ajāt* see glossary and 5.5.

Gorkha soldiers ... [but] Nepalis are very backward in learning: this fact everyone must acknowledge’.

Beneath the repeated bravery/ignorance paradox lay the ambivalence of many educated Nepalis to their proud martial reputation (cf. 5.4), the unstated suspicion that the glory earned from battlefield heroics is limited and counterproductive, translating into neither wider social esteem nor progress on a par with other communities.<sup>156</sup> The angst of a newly born middle class which saw the need for radical social change but felt powerless to achieve it manifested itself in many essays, such as Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān’s ‘Unity’ (1918c: 17):

Foreigners<sup>157</sup> insult us with all sort of insufferable terms such as stupid and uncivilised. Even as we see our society being beaten by waves of enmity (*dvaiṣatā rupī lahar harū*) and day by day sinking into the bottomless sea of decline, we have taken a vow of silence and sit with our hands tied. If our eyes do not open when such trouble is assaulting us then what hope can there be for any other progress?

Sardār Bahādur Bhīmdal Divān also touched on the theme of unity while making clear the inspiration provided by the examples of other, apparently more successful, communities. He had thrown out a challenge to all ‘Gorkhalis resident in Mugalan’, observing (1918: 24) that any number of other communities, be they ‘Madhise’, ‘Bhoṭe’,<sup>158</sup> or Bengali, managed to live together as united groups but that Gorkhalis, despite having spread through Darjeeling, Sikkim and parts of Jalpai[guri], had not achieved this: ‘shouldn’t we be saying that our Gorkhalis should also have such customs and society or should we carry on living blindly?’ Pratimān Siṃh Lāmā of Jalpaiguri took up the theme of backwardness in the context of a numerical puzzle, complaining that no one had managed to send in the correct answer to an earlier puzzle even though the problem was not particularly complicated.<sup>159</sup> He placed the blame squarely for this intellectual deficiency on the ‘learned society’ (1918a: 20) which seems to think that ‘like other *jātis* it is only natural

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<sup>156</sup> Hutt (1989) offers interesting perspectives on the positive and negative representation of Gurkha service in later literature.

<sup>157</sup> *videṣṭi harū*: the primary reference is presumably to people from other parts of India (cf. 5.3).

<sup>158</sup> See glossary for explanation of these terms.

<sup>159</sup> Lāmā’s detective novel *Mahākāl jāsūs* was published by the Hari Printing Press in August 1918. This was closely followed in December 1918 by *Dhruva charitra*, the work (adapted from the Bengali Satīṣchandra Dās) of another Jalpaiguri writer, Bhaktavīr Thāpā. On Lāmā see Appendix 3; as Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi notes (1993/94: 232-33), little information is available on Thāpā.

for Gorkha society to remain within the bounds of its social constraints (*samājkā bandhejmā*). His final call (*ibid.*: 21) to Nepalis to recognise their own failings as a necessary precondition to development is blunt: ‘as long as we ourselves do not know our own faults and do not point them out we cannot have progress’.<sup>160</sup> Lakṣmīkānta Ārjyāl was similarly unflinching in his assertion of Nepalis’ backwardness—‘like ignorant children’—although he was writing specifically of the population of Nepal as seen by Chandra Śamśer; he was optimistic, or perhaps just flattering, in his belief (1918: 13) that Chandra had now set *jāti* and society on the road to *unnati*.

Apart from the numerous poems and essays cited above, journals also provided space for the reporting of events and speeches. The address given by Sūryavikram as chair of the welcoming committee at the Banaras Nepali Library’s fourth anniversary gathering is a fine display of direct and inspiring communication. In an engaging and compelling style, it opened by looking at recent world events, especially the dramatic changes brought about by the First World War. For example, Sūryavikram referred to women getting the right to vote in Britain, the collapse of seemingly invincible great powers, President Wilson’s declarations on self-determination, and the ongoing conference in Paris which was considering, *inter alia*, establishing a league of nations. Amid such a tumult of global developments, he raised (1919b: 90) the inevitable question of the situation of Nepalis: ‘today the whole *jāti* is starting to ask the question: where do we stand in this world race? Everyone is infected by the fear that we may have fallen behind the rest’. Reviewing the miserable situation of Nepalis he concluded (*ibid.*) that the single main cause of Nepali backwardness is lack of *śakti* (power) and that people must gain *mukti* through *jñān*: ‘The four *vedas* call out ‘jñān, jñān’. *Smṛti*, *purāṇas* and history all cry out with one voice: ‘jñānāt mukti, jñānāt mukti’ (liberation through knowledge)’. As this choice of words implies, Sūryavikram moved effortlessly from international current affairs to the language of traditional religious wisdom. That he could do so with forceful style made him well placed to adopt a commanding position in a debate that encompassed extremes of ancient and modern learning. Thus it is of great interest to see where he chose to target his final

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<sup>160</sup> In the next issue he analysed the failings of learned society (4.4.2).

emphasis, a resounding call (*ibid.*: 91) to work for the development of the mother tongue for the protection and betterment of an independent cultural existence:

In order to gain knowledge we must make our mother tongue complete in every way (*sarvāṅgapūrṇa*). We cannot be advanced (*unnat*) without making our mother tongue of the highest class. If a *jāti* does not have its own language then that *jāti* is like a dead skeleton. An independent *jāti* must have an independent language. If we acknowledge our own civilisation, religion, actions and opinions (*āchār-vichār*) then we must bring our own language to life (*jīvit garāuṇnu*) ... along with the study of foreign languages, foreign behaviour will also penetrate and I do not have to say what damage that could do to our independent *jātiya* life, we are already seeing that directly. To develop our mother tongue we must make a great effort. Therefore we must now devote all of the strength of our intellects to the task of making our mother tongue well-nourished, beautiful and worthy.

### 3.3. The centrality of language: *unnati* and (*mātr*)*bhāṣonnati*

The development of Nepali as mother tongue (*mātrbhāṣā*) was a recurrent theme of *unnati* discourse. Indeed more than a theme, for the central role assigned to language in the overall project of social progress made it impossible for many writers to conceive of any *unnati* without *bhāṣonnati* (*unnati* of language). This position is evident from the very outset of the publication of *Chandra*. There is no room for misunderstanding the invocatory verse it chooses to grace its masthead in the first and every subsequent issue:

निज भाषा को उन्नति । सब उन्नति को मूल ॥

Progress of one's own language is the root of all progress;

बिना निज भाषा ज्ञान ले । मेटिदैन उर शूल ॥

Without knowledge of one's own language the pangs of the heart cannot be erased.

नगर बिलम्ब ये बन्धुवर । उठ अब मेटन शूल ॥

Do not delay, O best of friends, rise up now and erase the pangs.

गर निज भाषा उन्नति । प्रथम जो सब को मूल ॥

Make progress in your own language which is the first root of everything ...

...

This brief poem carries more meaning than its words alone imply. As an editorial note buried in the middle of the journal clarifies, it is not an original Nepali verse but a direct (albeit translated) borrowing from Hariśchandra. It is hoped (*Chandra* 1(1): 11) that some poet may emerge who can breathe life into the Nepali language in the same way as Hariśchandra did for Hindi. Thus no reader can be left in any doubt as to the inspiration for developing the Nepali language: this is not an isolated, spontaneous project but rather a considered adoption of a programme tested and practised in the Hindi-speaking world. The influence of Hariśchandra in his home city remained immense, even on a generation of

Nepali activists who never enjoyed Motīrām Bhaṭṭa's direct contact with him. *Chandra's* first issue carried a lengthy editorial expressing the aims of the journal in terms which range from idealistic assumption—in particular of the fundamental but unproved tenet that language development is the basis of social development—to practical considerations such as the need for blessing by the goddesses Lakṣmī (for customers and income) and Sarasvatī (for learned contributors and readers).

This editorial started (*Chandra* 1(1): 1) by noting that even as other Indian languages are forging ahead in their literature with a huge range of periodicals, some illustrated, Nepali has no monthly journal: 'among the languages of this country the Nepali language is the most backward'. Language is not only a means but an agent for *unnnati*: it is confidently stated that the 'cause of *unnnati*' for English, French and German speakers is their own language,<sup>161</sup> as it enables the spread of interest in all forms of science and learning. If these advanced countries were to see progress in their languages come to a halt then they would go into decline: 'this is why the most beloved object in the world is one's mother tongue. It is language that increases knowledge, language that brings wealth, in other words language herself is Sarasvatī and language herself is Lakṣmī.' The purpose of establishing *Chandra* is clarified: while other languages of the country have produced great books, Nepali literature still needs assistance in its development.<sup>162</sup> Yet much as the campaign for raising the profile and status of the mother tongue may have seemed a logical consequence of following the example of other communities, there is evidence that the concept of *māṭṛbhāṣā* itself would be hard even for educated readers to comprehend. What later

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<sup>161</sup> The relevant sentence has been misleadingly translated by Onta (1996a: 44) who gives 'national language' for the phrase 'deśī bhāṣā'. Reading his English one would assume an original 'rāṣṭrabhāṣā', yet this phrase was hardly in use at this time (cf. the final paragraph of this section and 5.2.2). The phrase could mean 'languages of the country' as in Sūryavikram's reference to other Indian languages as 'arū deśī bhāṣā' (C2(1): 19). Yet even with reference to established European states 'deśī' does not necessarily carry the connotation of a bounded, unitary national entity; rather—as in current Hindi usage—it can simply mean local or domestic, defined by not being 'videśī' (foreign; cf. 5.3). Onta's implication that even at this stage the project of developing Nepali was tied to nationalist thinking is therefore inappropriate.

<sup>162</sup> *Gorkhālī's* first editorial expressed similar sentiments: 'These days everyone has their eyes on the path to *unnnati* and people of each *jāti* are engaged in uplifting their own languages ... In India no *jāti's* people are not engaged in the improvement of their languages ... at this time when people of all *jātis* are working for the *unnnati* of their languages it is a great pity that only our Gorkha brothers are allowing their language to lag behind all others. Our language is no less capable than others of increasing learning and intelligence.'

writers take as a given—and imply to be an unproblematic matter of common understanding—was clearly a novel term that had to be explained.<sup>163</sup> Thus the *Chandra* editorial (*ibid.*: 2) felt it necessary to launch into a rather pedestrian definition of *mātrbhāṣā* and its significance:

Language is a person's other mother: just as a mother nurtures her son so does language also nurture him. For this reason the language which a child speaks with his inexpert tongue with his mother is called mother tongue. As it is one's *dharma* to serve one's mother so is it to serve one's mother tongue, for it is with the help of that very mother tongue that one has been nurtured.

Even by the fifth issue of *Chandra* there was little confidence that readers would have come to grips with the word. Vaijnāth Sedhāim's poem 'Ten points for *unnati* of learning' is predictable in its content and opinions but is accompanied by revealing footnotes which explain various words and phrases.<sup>164</sup> Not only did *mātrbhāṣā* require a footnote definition ('the language taught by one's mother in childhood'), it was set off from the rest of the stanza by being contained in quotation marks, highlighting its not yet firmly established position in the language. However, *Chandra* continued its proselytising and by the time that Dīpak's 'Mother tongue' (1915) appeared,<sup>165</sup> *mātrbhāṣā* stood free of footnotes and quotation marks. This rhythmic, alliterative and punning (but otherwise aesthetically undistinguished) poem devoted itself to urging *jāti* members to uplift their mother tongue:

‘सबैको सदा गर्न सक्छे सियार,  
सबै सभ्यछन् आज जेले तयार ।  
सबै कार्यमा मुख्य जानेर सार,  
सदा गर्नु होस् मातृ-भाषा प्रचार ॥

That which can always care for everyone,  
By which all today are civilised,  
Knowing it to be the primary essence of all  
tasks:  
Always propagate the mother tongue!

...

...

सदा आफ्नू जाति जाती बनाऊँ,  
महाँ जातिका तौति तौति चलाऊँ ।  
भने भाई हो ! होस्न केही विचार,  
सदा गर्नु होस् मातृ भाषा प्रचार’

May I always make my *jāti* good (*jāti*),  
May I move row on row of the great *jāti*.  
O brothers! Keep all this in mind.  
Always propagate the mother tongue!

<sup>163</sup> The term was, however, already in use in Nepali. *Sundarī* used it on its very first page (cf. 3.1), and *Mādhavī* (1(5): 96-101) published a lengthy article on the necessity of the mother tongue (by Rāmamañi Āchārya Dīkṣit, according to Nepal 1993: 8).

<sup>164</sup> Vaijanāth Sedhāim also used the second names Śarmā and Joṣī; I prefer Sedhāim throughout.

<sup>165</sup> The writer is identified as being from Nepal; he is most probably Dīpakeśvar Śarmā. The poem's title uses the colloquial Nepali 'āmā' rather than the Sanskrit 'mātr'.

The most significant contribution to the debate on *mātrbhāṣā* development in *Chandra* was 'The *unnati* of the Gorkha language' by *Gorkhāpatra* editor Kṛṣṇachandra Śarmā Aryāl, who sets out his views on the problems and prospects for progress of the Nepali language. His intervention in debate at this stage is of interest partly because of his position: as the editor of the only Nepali periodical with a long history of publication and official backing he was one of the more influential figures in the world of Nepali letters. His essay demonstrates that he had a wide-ranging understanding of the recent development of Nepali publishing, the state of the language, reasons for its lack of development and realistic proposals for improving the situation. Far from being a *Gorkhāpatra* partisan, or purely Nepal-oriented, he opened his essay with a valuable assessment of the development of literature which paid attention to the role of writers and the building of publishing infrastructure.

Aryāl's starting point was the disappointing, but not hopeless, situation of the mother tongue (he too qualifies his initial use of *mātrbhāṣā* with the explanation 'gorkhā bhāṣā' in parentheses). While there was a Paśupat Press established in Kathmandu, early developments such as the pioneering Prabhākārī Company of Banaras and Bombay's Gorkhā Granth Prachārak Maṇḍalī still centred on India. He is concerned (1915: 3-4) that while there has now been a continual growth in publishing activity within the kingdom of Nepal there is still much to be done: it is hardly possible 'to imagine that our literature and language may achieve even a thousandth of the progress of languages and literatures such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati'. His analysis of obstacles to progress is marked by practical observations: while his complaints about the limited readership echo those of other writers examined in 2.2, he also points out that lack of financial viability undermines the business opportunities in publishing and makes it impossible for authors to sustain themselves solely by writing. Thus (5): 'As long as publishers and good writers cannot even recover their costs—let alone gain suitable rewards—and are left only with worry it is pointless to hope for improvement in vernacular literature'. In this he is perhaps the earliest commentator clearly to consider questions of language and literature development as commercial and professional issues.

Aryāl next assessed the reasons for Nepali literature's lack of popular currency (while acknowledging the popularity of *śṛṅgār* literature despite its low class). He did not solely blame the public for lack of support: in the same breath as noting the minimal interest in reading books he pointed out that traditionalist Sanskrit scholars who take fright at the mere mention of the vernacular have been distinctly unhelpful. His approach remained more empirical than idealistic and again featured practical interpretations based on commercial as well as aesthetic considerations. Importantly, he saw the success of other languages as lying not only in a more advanced *jāti* consciousness or sense of social responsibility but also in better developed business models for literary production. He raised the issues of sales and marketing, advertising and the publicity value of getting books reviewed in journals: it is for want of such techniques that some books get published but still do not circulate (5-6).

In his consideration of mother tongue lovers' duty one can identify two key concepts, one practical and the other more abstract. First, he urged the establishment of libraries: this did indeed become an important feature of social improvement projects (4.3.2). Second, he realised that the general public were not so much philistine as simply not culturally conditioned to appreciate the type of literature he sought to promote; specifically, they lacked taste (*ras*).<sup>166</sup> Crucial to his suggestions—and an understanding that makes his analysis stand out from many others of less perspicacity—is the awareness that this taste is acquired rather than inborn; that if people at large are to become eager customers for quality journals and high literature they will have to have a new sense of aesthetic awareness inculcated and developed (cf. Orsini 2002 on literary *saṃskāras*). Thus he turned to approaches for popularising language and literature and awakening the appropriate sensibility. Lovers of literature (6) must encourage others to read and 'keep on offering continual inspiration so that *ras* can be engendered in those who lack it'. As an editor himself, it is hardly surprising that he identified journals as a major means for achieving these goals. He had first hand experience of the difficulty in establishing a market—although the weekly *Gorkhāpatra* has been established for fourteen or fifteen years 'the number of customers is not satisfactory'.

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<sup>166</sup> In fact, *ras* means much more than just 'taste', as it invokes traditional Sanskrit genre categories (see glossary).

Throughout his essay, Aryāl maintained a clear vision of a battle waged on three major fronts: the development of infrastructure, the development of the Nepali language itself, and the development of cultural sensibility. He welcomed developments in both the government and private sectors, within and outside Nepal, that could contribute to the overall goal of *māṭṛbhāṣā* development. Thus he reported (7) the ‘joyful news’ of Kathmandu’s new Bhagavatī Press (‘from here also the work of publishing in the Gorkha language will start shortly’) and recorded his pleasure that the government had established the GBPS and that the Gorkha Agency had decided to produce a series of books.<sup>167</sup> Yet his final appeal returned to the comparative situation of Nepali and its poverty in literary output and readership compared to English and other Indian languages. He remained optimistic that there could be progress but it must be envisaged in terms of catching up with the major South Asian languages that were already showing the way ahead.<sup>168</sup>

Moving on a few years to the launch of *Chandrikā* in January 1918—and returning to the opinions of Mīn Bahādur Bhaṭṭa—we find sentiments on the centrality of *māṭṛbhāṣā* very much in line with those expressed in *Chandra*.<sup>169</sup> Bhaṭṭa, however, found inspiration for *māṭṛbhāṣā* development not in other Indian languages but in western countries (1918: 12):

*Unnati* in one’s own mother tongue (*āmābhāṣā*) is the root of the study of learning. For as long as there is no *unnati* in one’s mother tongue how can there be *unnati* in learning? Nowadays some opinions about reforming the mother tongue are spreading but up till now there is little *unnati* to be seen. The means by which our brothers in western countries have

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<sup>167</sup> An extended version of this essay—co-authored with the Agency director (Āryāl and Seḍhāīm 1917)—became the first publication in the heralded series and was an influence on the young Bālkrṣṇa Sama (Onta 1996c: 227). Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1999/2000a: 144) records that of the planned 25 volumes only eight to ten had been published by 1943. He attributes this to the situation rather than any failure on Seḍhāīm’s behalf: ‘[His] enthusiasm and effort were praiseworthy. Work that the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti failed to achieve as an institution, the Gorkha Agency managed to complete through the effort of one individual, Vaijanāth Seḍhāīm’.

<sup>168</sup> Here his description of Nepali as ‘our national language (*rāṣṭra-bhāṣā*)’ is noteworthy: despite this term’s later currency—and constitutional significance—its appearance in this context is a forerunner of nationalist terminology absent from most writing of this period.

<sup>169</sup> One year earlier, Kathmandu-based poet Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl (1917: 1) had expressed hesitancy over his mastery of Nepali: ‘Neither have I the intelligence suited to reading [weighty] books, nor have I had good sight of the face (*rāmraī mukh dekheko chhū*) of the mother tongue (Gorkha language) ...’

increased their pride and the *unnati* of their learning is clear to everyone and they even say it: 'Mother tongue, why should we not do whatever is necessary for your good?'<sup>170</sup>

The ideal of devoted service to the mother tongue was an enduringly prominent rhetorical feature. It was seen as unconditionally praiseworthy, hence Sūryavikram's lauding of Motīrām as a 'supreme devotee of the mother tongue' (Bhaṭṭa 1927: 2). And it was Sūryavikram, in his essay 'The time has come to act', who developed a coherent argument which encompassing both dedicated *māṭṛbhāṣā sevā* and a practical exposition of the benefits that an increased role for Nepali could bring. While much of the rhetoric about language worship was characterised by a pseudo-spiritual devotion detached from mundane considerations, Sūryavikram was keenly aware of the futility of mouthing rhetoric without advancing towards measurable targets. He argued powerfully (1918a: 3) that 'it is impossible to make education simple and accessible without development of the mother tongue'.<sup>171</sup> Yet alongside a pedagogical understanding that has stood the test of time, Sūryavikram was conscious of social limitations and passionate enough to confront them head on. He was not only contemptuous of hollow rhetoric but also of the sneering complacency of some of his audience (*ibid.*):

For this reason we must start to serve our mother tongue with unanimity. Even as I write the words 'with unanimity' in my mind's eye I can see our great worthies (*baḍe baḍe mahānubhāv*) smiling. I understand the reason for their smiles. They are thinking 'he's really said something difficult'. But dear brothers of our country! The service of one's country is a hard vow.

As Sūryavikram was mapping out the terrain of language activism, *Chandrikā* had already started to fulfil one of the roles envisaged by Kṛṣṇachandra Aryāl; indeed Aryāl's own *Gorkhā-bhāṣā* (1917; fn. 167) was the subject of the journal's first book review. The review is favourable—'the importance of the mother tongue is well demonstrated ... this book is worth reading by all to realise the condition of the Gorkha language'—but not

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<sup>170</sup> One year later, Śambhuprasād opened his poem 'Lamp' (Dhūṅyāl 1919: 14) with similarly lofty ideals: 'Now make the mother tongue great!/Shake off laziness and deliver hope./Make your mind pure and offer it up;/Earn its priceless wealth'.

<sup>171</sup> The effectiveness of the *māṭṛbhāṣā* as an educational medium was subsequently reiterated by 'Prabhākar' (1918: 3): 'Education also should not be given in foreign languages but in the mother tongue. How quickly *unnati* comes about from learning gained in the mother tongue is clear from the history of Japan.' Japan was the object of admiration across Asia not only for its industrial and economic progress but particularly for its defeat of Russia in 1905, a powerfully symbolic demonstration of European vulnerability.

entirely uncritical. For example, it notes with disappointment that although the Gorkha language has gained such wide currency it is strange that there is no examination of the language's origins. Ultimately, the review concludes (C1(3): 24) with a call for action: 'It will be difficult for there to be *unnati* in the Gorkha language until the number of publishers of such books in Gorkha society increases, so it is appropriate for all to pay special attention to such a task'.

Yet the obstacles on the path to language progress were not confined to those that had been frequently repeated—the small readership, lack of infrastructure, etc. While mainstream discourse looked to the ignorant and uneducated general public as a problem, there were other voices. Some argued convincingly that this discourse itself was elitist and unrepresentative (4.4.2); others singled out members of upper social strata as obstructive or even downright hostile to the promotion of the vernacular. For example, Prabhākar's essay 'Samjhauṭo' identified the rich as a hindrance to the development of the mother tongue, using a satirical sketch of their habits and their sycophantic hangers-on to arrive at the heart of his argument (1918: 2). Despite the fact that contributions to *Chandra* and earlier journals came almost exclusively from Brāhmaṇs, a pattern only gradually changing in *Chandrikā*, Harināth Śarmā Khanāl used his essay 'Mātṛbhāṣā' to lay much of the blame for Nepali's poor state firmly on *paṇḍits*. 4.4.2 examines the elitism of the public sphere that coalesced around Nepali print culture. Here (Khanāl 1918: 5) it is interesting to note that the old elite of the *paṇḍit* class stands apart from a new class of educated writers in the vernacular:

It is with great sadness that I have to write that even now it seems that our *svadeśīya paṇḍits*' interest in the mother tongue has still not greatly increased. For while the pitiful and low condition of the mother tongue has led to various papers and journals being born, there is not even a single miserable published article from the lotus hands of our esteemed *paṇḍits* to be seen! While foreign languages have reached such a peak of *unnati* and countries and societies have been reformed, their hard hearts are not torn apart even as we find ourselves counted among the ranks of the semi-barbarian and barbarian (*ardhajamgalī, jamgalī*). If our revered *paṇḍits* were to take on unity among themselves and adopt the custom of writing in the mother tongue could our language not reach a state of advancement? Certainly indeed it could but alas! Where is the free time for our honoured *paṇḍits*? For day and night they must satisfy their lust for *chākari*.

Khanāl (*ibid.*: 6) concludes his intervention in similarly provocative language:

When they hear the good news of journals being born they immediately look on with hatred and contempt. They have studied with effort only to show off their certificate by stroking their whiskers in front of their wife and servants and declaring 'I am an *upādhyāya*, I am

an *āchārya*': is this how they make themselves great? Does no shame well in the hearts of these respected *paṇḍits* as Hindi, Bengali, Assamese and other languages are approved by universities while our mother tongue (Pārvaṭīya) is not approved for want of grammars, literature and dictionaries?

Later Pārasmaṇi too complained of *paṇḍits*' lack of commitment to Nepali. In its second year of publication *Chandrikā* had set a poetry *samasyā* for competition. However, after some months an editorial note (2(7): 151) announced that no *pūrti* (completion of the verse) worthy of printing on the title page has been received. 'We used to be proud to say that the Gorkha language lacked only prose writers, that there were many verse writers in our society. But what is this? Do we still need to entreat our learned *paṇḍits* to write in the vernacular?' Khanāl's article had also prompted Pārasmaṇi to publicise the campaign underway to have Nepali recognised as a subject for composition in Calcutta University matriculation examinations through an editorial footnote.<sup>172</sup> As the campaign was fairly well advanced it was not many months before *Chandrikā* could rejoice in reporting its successful conclusion (cf. 4.2.2). From the success of this movement Sūryavikram (1919a: 19-20) drew the potentially radical conclusion that the *nepālī jāti* must stand up and campaign for its needs, prefiguring the motivations of political and cultural institution-builders examined in the next chapter:

From this success we should also learn a lesson. From this work we have grasped the knowledge that through a movement even a hard task can be accomplished. The Nepali *jāti* has not well understood the nobility of a movement (*āndolanko mahātmya*) and in any issue we give in right at the outset. By doing this the *jāti* suffers great damage. For a good cause one must from time to time make a movement and it will surely bring success.

This section has aimed to demonstrate both the centrality of language—specifically, a rapidly solidifying concept of mother tongue—to the wider discourse of social improvement and the extent to which discussion of the Nepali language revolved around shared assumptions while still allowing some important differences in approach. That reverence for the mother tongue and an acute sense of its need for development was inspired by observation of other communities—be they western or Indian—is clear from many writers' direct comments. Yet debate about *māṭṛbhāṣonnati* was shaped around distinctly Nepali

<sup>172</sup> Pārasmaṇi explained that students in Calcutta had been dispatched to enquire of the Vice Chancellor Sir Ashutosh Mukherji what conditions had to be met for the *gorkhābhāṣā* to gain recognition in the same way as other Indian languages. His answer reportedly stressed the need for linguistic uniformity: Pārasmaṇi (C1(5): 5-6) urged his readership to assist in the standardisation process, which would later become a major preoccupation of his (5.2.2).

realities as well as universally applicable values. In particular, the process of defining the nature of a nascent Nepali society is hinted at by the diverse reference to Nepalis as fellow countrymen, brothers and sisters, members of *jāti* or *samāj* (society). Similarly we have seen the language itself referred to simply as *bhāṣā*, as ‘Nepali’, and predominantly as ‘the Gorkha language’, issues that are addressed in detail in 5.2.1.

In other words, the rhetoric of language development, like that of *unnati* as a whole (3.4.1), provided many writers with a superficial unity of purpose while retaining an internal flexibility and diversity indicating areas which might later be subjected to efforts at further definition and standardisation. Most obviously, this category includes the language itself: apart from the variety of appellations, the Nepali of this period was characterised by a notable lack of uniformity in spelling, grammar and style. Efforts to bring the language itself under control by codifying and standardising it have been passed over here because they are dealt with in detail in 5.2.2. A further issue was the position of other ‘Nepali’ languages, the true mother tongues—many of Tibeto-Burman origin—spoken by large sections of the putative Nepali *jāti*, especially predominant in Darjeeling. It is worth noting that at this stage of debate there is little reference to the fact that most members of the putative Nepali *jāti* or nation spoke no Nepali at all, or were only just becoming accustomed to it as a second language and *lingua franca*. Their languages are ignored by writers in pursuit of the larger goal for Nepali which they implicitly assume to be the *māṭṛbhāṣā* of all who would lay claim to belonging within Nepali society. However, some writers did address their position and acknowledge that rationalising their relationship to Nepali was a necessary precondition to the creation of a composite, culturally unified Nepali society. This was a process tied to the development of concepts of territorial and political units such as *deś* and *rāṣṭra*, and of large social units such as *jāti* and *samāj*. Without pre-empting the discussion of Chapter 5, we may note that Lakṣmīkānta Ārjyāl’s vision of a supreme *rāṣṭrabhāṣā* (1918: 15) indicated the way in which such issues would be drawn into ongoing discussion language and progress: ‘Once the mother tongues of all the *pārvatīya jāts* (hill castes/ethnic groups) have attained sufficient progress there must be an overall national language (*sarvopari rāṣṭrabhāṣā*). In keeping with the current times, in

the hills our Gorkha language must be the national language. These days it is the Gorkha language which has gained much currency within the Nepal empire (*sāmrājya*).’

### **3.4. Tradition, progress and morality: competing concepts and the normative tendency**

#### *3.4.1. Progressive and regressive versions of unnati*

The rhetoric of *unnati*—be it grandiloquent, reverential or despairing—tends to imply shared commitment to a project inspired by common sentiments. Yet the assumption that *unnati* carried a single meaning is not necessarily well founded. Rather than interpreting discourse in terms agreed by retrospective consensus we should concentrate on asking what *unnati* meant to those who deployed it in this period. We then discover that a variety of motivations and interpretations lie beneath the superficial uniformity of terminology. The invocation of *unnati* could be at once a deeply conservative or a radically progressive statement; it could imply the reinforcement and refinement of tradition or a complete redrawing of social boundaries; it could draw inspiration from reassuringly ancient Hindu values or from revolution in Russia; it could depend on great leadership or on the action of the masses; it could extol Vedic knowledge or embrace modern science and technology; it could look to morality or to economics for salvation. In summary, the treatment of *unnati* discourse as monolithic and internally coherent masks a significant tension between what can be broadly categorised as progressive and retrogressive visions of social improvement. In this it reflects the paradox of nationalism observed by Nairn (cited in Gandhi 1999: 106), that it encourages societies to ‘propel themselves forward to a certain sort of goal (industrialisation, prosperity, equality with other peoples, etc.) *by a certain sort of regression*—by looking inwards, drawing more deeply on their indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths about themselves and so on.’

The progressive approach is best exemplified by Sūryavikram, who was the most inspiring advocate of a modernising project founded on broad political awareness and a belief in the effective agency of individuals acting collectively towards common goals.

Indeed, while his call to arms is for the stated purpose of promoting education it is couched within a transparently political agenda (1918a: 2), reformist if not revolutionary.<sup>173</sup>

Thanks to this global war the drumbeat of independence is starting to sound in every corner of the world. Russia, which had borne autocratic excesses of the first degree, has now brought down the tsars responsible for those excesses and is establishing a regime through representatives of the people. As India has gained the first dawn glimpse of the sun of independence an unremitting effort to achieve self-rule (*svarājya*) within the British Empire is underway ... with such an opportunity is it not appropriate for us to take action? Must it be us who always remain the wretched of this world? ... The only means for the elimination of our woes—economic, social and all others—is education. If we commit ourselves to the spread of education then certainly our *unnati* will come about soon.

His address calls for committed engagement in social development by all educated Nepalis and pours scorn on those unwilling to become involved. His conviction that united action can enable change (*ibid.*: 3-4) is entirely consistent with his comments on the campaign for recognition of Nepali by Calcutta University that we observed above:

We must abandon the mentality of ‘what can I do alone?’ and grasp the courage to do whatever we are capable of. Opening libraries and schools in village after village, we must energetically promote education. Even if we can do nothing else we can at least promote education among our servants, relatives and sisters. If educated Nepalis did even that much it would be something.

Once again, the ultimate power of his message rests on his persuasive use of language, whether sophisticated or idiomatically vernacular (*ibid.*: 4): ‘Look at the state of your own country. Consider what you can do for progress and take action. The time has come to act. The world is doing this. Why should we sit around like idiots humming and hawing (*lāṭā jhai akka na bakka bhayera*)?’. Another progressive aspect of *unnati* discourse was its relationship to science: that the liberal-arts-inclined Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā chose ‘Vijñānvilās’ (‘delight in science’) as his *nom de plume* perhaps indicates the increasing symbolic appeal of scientific progress, and other writers are more direct. For example, in an essay on ‘The importance of science (scientific wonders)’, Tārānāth Śarmā (1918d: 5) strikes a futuristic note as he argues the benefits of embracing modern science.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>173</sup> Much as journals such as *Chandra* and *Chandrikā* sought to distance themselves from religion and politics, this is just one of many instances where the journal’s own rules appear to be stretched to the limit. For example, *Chandrikā*’s sixth rule (printed on the inside cover of each issue) states that ‘This journal will have no link with current political or religious policy. Respected writers are requested not to waste any effort in sending in articles or poetry of this type.’

<sup>174</sup> However, science could still be drawn from traditional sources, as is illustrated by ‘Simple remedies for indigestion (extracted by the Ayurvedic doctor himself)’ by Paṇḍit Kulchand Gautam of

This whole world is full of science. And indeed, the glory of science is indescribable. It is science that directs the mysteries of nature. For improving the lot of humankind and bringing about progress in opinions, for getting rid of the darkness of ignorance and spreading the radiance of knowledge, even for improving the country's economic plight—in all these areas the job done by science cannot be done by anything else. It is science that can accomplish the aims of human life. With the assistance of science even the hardest tasks can be accomplished with ease. Science is the developer of our intellect.

The essay continues at length in a similar vein before moving on to praising machines, of which Śarmā has a wonderful variety to cite, from ticket machines on German railways to machines that do all the work of serving customers food and drink in hotels, etc. (*ibid.*: 7). Meanwhile essays such as Śeṣ Maṇi's 'Natural Beauty' (1918b), with its description of a range of natural phenomena around the world, introduced the readership to some of the fruits of modern scientific enquiry. Given the exaggerated descriptions and the reverential language, contributions such as Śarmā's are at one level hard to separate from other strands of *unnati* discourse. Yet the very proposition of scientific invention as a means of social development entails a radical shift in perspective: the social transformation that could come about through scientific revolution and innovation was potentially wide ranging. In particular, Śarmā noted that science could play an important role in economic development, striking a note that was echoed in further essays (including two of his own).

We have already observed how even the drama *Vidyāsundar* featured an attractive depiction of successful market commerce, thus linking the abstract concepts of *vidyā* and *unnati* to a growing awareness of the economic factors required for self-sufficiency and Nepali national *unnati*.<sup>175</sup> For Lakṣmīkānta Ārjyāl there was no theoretical difficulty in establishing a cause and effect relationship between the improvement of learning and the Nepal government's decision to ban the importation of certain goods. Writing from the comfort of Calcutta, he argued (1918: 13) that the government rightly banned luxury imports because such goods encouraged the populace to waste their time in self-indulgence and distracted them from industry and work. Indeed, the avoidance or exclusion of foreign

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Nepal (1918). This presents a range of Ayurvedic treatments for indigestion, including a list of 63 substances that can cause gastric problems and their respective antidotes.

<sup>175</sup> While the Kurseong based *Chandrikā* provided a platform for issues affecting Nepalis within and outside Nepal, writing on economic development tends to focus exclusively on Nepal. Local economic affairs, agriculture, industry, investment and unemployment were later to become issues for more pressing public debate in the Darjeeling area, as featured in journals such as *Ādarśa* (1930) and *Nebulā* (1935-36).

goods invades almost all commentary on economic issues, reflecting both an awareness of Nepal's precarious independence and the growing *svadeśī* discourse within the Indian nationalist movement. Liechty (1997) presents a valuable historical discussion of the penetration of foreign people and goods into Kathmandu but his lengthy analysis does not even mention the Indian *svadeśī* movement. He cites (1997: 27) compelling evidence—such as the virtual elimination of indigenous mining and metal-working industries and the growth of cloth imports—of how 'Nepal, while remaining officially outside the British colonial empire, was drawn into its exploitative economic sphere' yet he attributes suspicion of foreign goods almost exclusively to the Rāṇā regime. The discourse presented here suggests, more interestingly, that in this area of policy the Rāṇās found themselves unusually allied with an Indian nationalist programme that had gained significant coverage and support in the very periodicals that the Rāṇās were so suspicious of. Furthermore, Nepali public perceptions of foreignness, at least among the consuming middle classes, must have been conditioned by the nationalist *svadeśī/vidēśī* dialectic. Even the supposedly politically anodyne *Sundarī* had championed the *svadeśī* cause in its news sections, printing many favourable reports.<sup>176</sup>

Tārānāth Śarmā had already written forcefully on the need for economic and industrial development in 'Let us be industrious' which bore the subtitle 'Industry alone is the foremost expedient'. In his opinion (1918b: 17), the lessons of advanced countries pointed to industry as the sole means for progress whether for *deś* or *jāti*. His analysis of Nepal's economic weakness (*ibid.*: 18) blamed both Rāṇā policy for failing to encourage the growth

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<sup>176</sup> For example, one issue (1(3): 19, 20) reported enthusiastically on a Calcutta meeting (7 August 1906) to mark the first anniversary of a mass gathering in the Town Hall where participants had pledged to forswear foreign goods. A further report on a convention of Medinipur Brāhmaṇs and Mahājans (under the headline 'The result of not using *svadeśī* [goods]') told how one temple *paṇḍā* insisted that he saw no difference in *vidēśī* and *svadeśī* goods. A fellow Brāhmaṇ declared that he would be struck by lightning and after a few days a lightning bolt duly hit his temple and killed his daughter: 'the *paṇḍā* was as good as dead, and has maybe died by now.' Further issues published reports from Kanpur (1(4): 31), a lengthy description of a *svadeśī* meeting in Banaras itself, with quotes from various speakers (1(5): 47-48), a report of another local meeting in which participants promised to boycott foreign sugar (1(7): back cover), the tale of a *svadeśī*-sworn barber who, noticing half way through shaving a Bengali *bābu*'s beard that he was wearing a British cloth *dhotī* and shoes, refused to proceed and made him cut the rest of his beard himself (1(9-10): back cover). While concentrating on the associated art exhibition, it also covered the Congress convention in Calcutta (1(7, 8): back cover). Under the editorship of Harihar Śarmā news coverage increased but tended increasingly towards the sensational and avoided politics.

of businesses and industries and selfish individual traders and the people as a whole who are willing to use foreign goods constantly: 'It is impossible to write how much wealth goes abroad from our homes on the smallest, meanest goods. Seeing this, what's to stop our country's rich traders from setting up industries for these things?' Bemoaning Nepal's increasing dependence on foreign goods, he concludes (*ibid.*: 9) with ten commandments for the patriotic reader, including the following:

Do not make your country impure (*apavitra*) by bringing in foreign instruments and foreign machinery... Do not touch food and drink brought from abroad even with your hand... It is through the grains, water, fruits and roots born in your own country that incomparable power will be communicated to your body... Do not even think of foreign items, do not even touch them with your hand.

Similar sentiments with a more express political message were expressed by 'Ek kṣudralekhak', who in his 'Collection of moral gems' (1918: 2) advised readers 'To be free and independent take up learning otherwise you will be fit for slavery and servitude... Whoever dishonours *svadeśī* goods by enjoying foreign goods is a man on a level with the sinner who abandons his wife to fall in love with a prostitute'.<sup>177</sup> Tārānāth Śarmā returned to the theme of industry and personal industriousness in the second year of *Chandrikā* publication with his essay 'Udyam' ('Effort, industry'), the main thrust of which is clear from its opening sentence (1919b: 32): 'If there is any particular necessity for our country at the present time then above all it must be for industry and industrious people'. For his conclusion (*ibid.*: 49-51), he returned to citing examples of European countries and America to demonstrate the need for industry and economic development. Such scientific, economic and industrial modes of discourse are neither exclusive nor necessarily incompatible with more traditional laudatory prose and verse. However, they introduce a significantly modern and globally aware perspective into an area of debate that otherwise could be surprisingly backward-looking. Moreover, contributions hinting at a sharper political consciousness underlying their calls for industry indicate that writers were pushing gently at the bounds of journal apoliticism.

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<sup>177</sup> In a more literary style the poem 'Hare Śiva' by 'Chet' of Kashi complains about foreign influence on everything with fourteen lines all of the following basic structure (1919: 12): 'uṭhāi bideśī, sutāi bideśī, hiṃḍāi bideśī, basāi bideśī...' ('Their getting up is foreign, their sleeping is foreign, their walking is foreign, their sitting is foreign...').

Meanwhile, a conservative strand of *unnati* discourse flourished. Let us remember that the literal meaning of *unnati* is ‘ascent’ and its logical counterpart is *avanati* ‘descent’. These two words furnished a vocabulary well suited to implying a fall from a golden age of high moral and cultural standards and the need to rise again to classical heights. For while Sūryavikram may have been enthusing audiences with references to the Russian revolution and a transforming modernity, the majority of writers were building a rhetoric of *unnati* that was characterised by a nostalgic or idealising conservatism. We have already noted Maṇisimh Guruṅ’s comments on the need for classical ‘ideal people’ to bring about beneficial social improvement, a far cry from Sūryavikram’s exhortation to all members of society to become actively involved in reform. This conservative strand of discourse preferred to see *unnati* as a return to the founts of ancient or eternal wisdom and to equate social progress with, for example, Sanskrit and *sāstra* education, a position well characterised by ‘Phattya’ (1918a: 10): ‘Alas! Alas! When one considers the gap between the advanced condition of our ancient preceptors and our present deficient condition a great sorrow arises and even the hairs on one’s body stand on end’. Meanwhile, the first issue of *Chandrikā* contains an essay on ‘Dharma’ by ‘Sevak’ which places the need for mother tongue development firmly within a framework of rejecting English and Christian influence and returning to the proper study of Sanskrit, albeit accompanied by women’s education (1918: 14-15):

Nowadays people pay no attention to the Sanskrit language but studying English they are making themselves into ‘gentlemen’ with ‘coat’, ‘pantaloon’, ‘hat’, ‘boots’, ‘tie’, ‘collar’ and so on but they do not know what is required to be ‘gentlemen’.<sup>178</sup> They are ready to scorn their own *vedas* and *purānas* and read the ‘Bible’. Abandoning their religion they take their meals in a ‘hotel’... O friends! In the end three substances are necessary for the acquisition of *dharma*: (1) women’s education, (2) development of the mother tongue, and (3) development of the Sanskrit language. It is of utmost importance that we give assistance as far as possible and, remembering our duty, dedicate our bodies, minds and wealth to attaining these and pass our days sharing in the pleasure of this and the next world.

Jīt Bahādur Mukhiyā (fn. 150) made the causal connection between the current state of the *gorkhā jāti* and the lack of attention to classical religious teachings even more explicit. He argued (C1(1): 22) that people would like to know what ancient books can tell them

<sup>178</sup> For a similarly scornful description of Nepali women’s adoption of western dress, see 3.4.2.

about their current situation but are hindered by the lack of teachers who could explain about the three categories of works, those created by god, by the ṛṣis and by men:

But Alas! The Gorkha *jātis* are ignorant of these things. Their main work is to remain absorbed in all sorts of addictions (such as drink, gambling and cards, etc.). But the Gorkha *jāti* is engaged in these bad habits for want of a branch to grasp and a foothold to step on. If someone had explained the meaning of the above-mentioned three types of book well, then the Gorkha *jāti* would never have fallen into such bad habits.

Similarly, historical or literary essays could provide a platform for reinforcing such opinions. In ‘The great poet Kālidās and *vidyā*’, Kṛṣṇachandra Āryāl (whose analysis of Nepali writing and publishing we examined above) painted a picture of a golden age, reminding readers (1918: 11) that the renowned Sanskrit poet and dramatist Kālidās was one of the ‘nine jewels’ of Harṣa Vikramāditya’s court: ‘at that time the advanced state of learning was doubtless very sound’. Āryāl also idealised Sanskrit itself and cited a Sanskrit *śloka* as further evidence for the supreme power of *vidyā* (*ibid.*: 11-12):

Scholars of all countries and all times have accepted without doubt the fact that Sanskrit is the root of all languages. The Sanskrit language is incredibly sweet. The way in which verbal ornamentation, poetry and *ras* is incorporated into the Sanskrit language is not to be found in other languages. This much is evident to all those who know Sanskrit ... for this reason it is of the utmost benefit to all that everyone should devote themselves in every way to the *unnati* of learning. Nothing else can provide the respect which is accorded by learning. It is learning which gives meaning to human life. Even if one has everything else, without learning it lacks splendour whereas if one has learning then one can be considered rich even if one lacks any other possessions.

His essay continued (in the next issue) with a discussion of *chhanda* (metrics), mentioning the existence of twenty to twenty-five Sanskrit-style *ślokas* written in Nepali. This prompted an editorial footnote (*ibid.*: 9) asking for their whereabouts to be revealed and allowing Pārasmaṇi to add his weight to the demand for high class literature. He too called for development of Nepali inspired by and modelled on Sanskrit rather than decadent *śṛṅgār* literature, idealising the classical language and equating it with classical virtues while conveniently ignoring the fact that it also furnished the basis of later *śṛṅgār* traditions:

If only esteemed poets would take the trouble of composing such extremely useful *chhandas* how beneficial it would be for us; but where is the leisure for our holders of the position of poet in this twentieth century (age of poetry) to make some effort towards composing good metres! They have no time off from writing poetry imbued with all sorts of erotic sentiment!! What a pity!!!

For writers pursuing this type of argument, Nepalis were not so much backward compared to other contemporary peoples, as to the paragons of learning and culture of a

presumed golden age. Historical arguments were similarly used (cf. 5.4) to authenticate modern Nepali identity by tying it to glorious Aryan traditions. The ever-flexible *unnati* thus managed to embrace widely differing propositions with regard to ideals of social organisation.

### 3.4.2. *Morality and social order*

Morality—both personal and public—was a frequent theme of early Nepali writing, be it in journals or in didactic or religious books.<sup>179</sup> Indeed, there is no clear dividing line between appropriate private behaviour and the standards of conduct which society can demand or expect of individuals. Publications played an important role in defining and reinforcing such standards and attempting to establish a normative social order through the value systems they endorsed. As implied above, for many writers the project of social and cultural *unnati* was fundamentally a moral endeavour, for editors and essayists the temptation to use journals as a pulpit for preaching was hard to resist. In this they were in line with their English predecessor Addison (founder, with Steele, of *Tatler* in 1709), who, in Habermas's words (1989: 43) 'viewed himself as a censor of manners and morals', his essays dealing with 'charities and schools for the poor, the improvement of education, pleas for civilized forms of conduct, polemics against the vices of gambling, fanaticism, and pedantry...' However, they did not necessarily share his distrust of pedantry and learned aesthetes, nor his concern for a civic morality distinct from moral theology. The quest for improvement could encourage prescriptive moralising which may have alienated the members of society it was aiming to affect. The dividing line between modernising reforming zeal and puritanical censorship of public culture was narrow.

The framework of moral guidance and the identification of significant social vices was well established in the pages of *Chandra*. These too could be adopted from other communities: for example, the essay 'Points worth bearing in mind when adopting the behaviour of any society' (*Chandra* 1(6): 6-7) was reproduced from the Hindi journal *Prabodh Chandrikā* and was immediately followed by an essay on 'Friendship' (*Chandra* 1(6): 7-9), a frequent topic of Sanskrit fables and *purāṇas*. Similarly, the precepts

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<sup>179</sup> Hutt (1985: 8-9) gives details of Nepali didactic literature in the OIOC collection.

embodied in the *Manusmṛti* code of conduct formed a well of material from which modern sermons could be drawn. Examples to be found in *Chandra* include ‘Addiction’ by Paṇḍit Komalnāth Adhikārī (1915a), a clumsy didactic poem built around a stanza from Manu, and ‘Faith in god saves one from sin’ by Vaijanāth Sedhāim (1915c), an essay based on two Manu *ślokas*. ‘Assistance’ by Kṛṣṇaprasād Śarmā Regmī offered further uncomplicated moral guidance; a single verse (1915: 23) gives sufficient flavour of this fairly typical didactic doggerel.<sup>180</sup>

सहायता ले सब कार्य बन्दछन् ।	With assistance all tasks will be complete
सहाय हो मुख्य भनेर भन्दछन् ॥	The helper is the main thing, people repeat.
आपत् हरू क्यै परि आउलान् जब ।	Whatever disasters may befall
सहायता ले टरछन् अनी सब ॥ १ ॥	Assistance will see us through them all.

In a similar vein, Komalnāth Adhikārī’s ‘Jūā’ (1914) dealt at length with the evil of gambling: despite already running to thirty-six tedious stanzas, it was only an extract from a longer diatribe. A few years later Śambhuprasād Dhuṅgyāl managed to compose an epic hundred-verse condemnation of gambling (‘Dyut śatak (jūvā)’, 1917/18) in a single day (according to Bhaṭṭarāī 1980/81: 2).<sup>181</sup> In its final days, *Chandra* concentrated on presenting information on Gautam Buddha, the entire final issue consisting of two lengthy essays on his principles and religious injunctions. *Chandrikā* continued to showcase some writing on general virtues, most with a social theme.<sup>182</sup> As far as the editor’s own creative

<sup>180</sup> For some other works of his see Bhaṭṭarāī (1988/89: 262-80).

<sup>181</sup> Its opening invocation (1917/18: 59) urges readers: ‘Casting out from one’s mind the dark evils of dice/take pleasure in body and mind for all time in virtuous acts’. The theme of gambling was not a new one: *SP* record two works on gambling published in Banaras in 1912, both with print runs of 1,000. One was ‘a collection of poems decrying gambling’, the other a ‘descriptive poem’ on ‘the gambling boom in the (Nepal) hills’, the choice of words implying that anti-gambling poetry may have been prompted by an increase in its practice by Nepalis. The same source describes Śikharnāth’s 1915 *Dyūt mudrāṣṭak* (2,000 copies) as ‘eight poems in praise of money and eight poems in condemnation of gambling’, perhaps indicating the delicacy of the moral line to be toed. Bhaṭṭarāī (1988/89: 37-38) reproduces one section (‘Raupyamudrāṣṭak’) whose light touch and ironic tone—typical of Śikharnāth—suggest this work cannot be dismissed as dull didacticism. All Nepali writing on gambling stands in the shadow of an inescapable (and ambivalent) literary precedent, the Pāṇḍavas’ loss of their kingdom in a game of dice, to which one book of the *Mahābhārata* is devoted.

<sup>182</sup> For example, Tārānāth Śarmā’s essay ‘Paropakār’ (‘Assistance to others’) offers appropriate classical quotations and illustrations from the *purāṇas* on the topic of service to others, such as the tale of Mahārṣi Dadhīchi (1919a: 16), who even gave his life for another: ‘When one considers it, assistance to others is indeed the essence of human life. ... in ancient times love for it among the Aryans had reached and settled at a very high level. Examples of it can be found throughout the *purāṇas*.’

impulses are concerned, the noted critic Rāmkr̥ṣṇa Śarmā (1983: 26) declares himself unable to describe any of Pārasmaṇi's work of that period as '[high] quality literature': 'His energy and enthusiasm were unequalled but one feels that literary study and a literary viewpoint were squashed and constricted by his moral viewpoint.' In fact, the *unnati* cheerleaders often depicted themselves as a small and isolated band of embattled soldiers in a battle against multiple social evils that had engulfed other Nepalis and sapped their moral judgement. For example, rather than describing its deserving potential beneficiaries (as the Banaras Nepali Library had), the Kurseong Gorkha Library's appeal (C1(1): 18) emphasised the need for a library as a bastion of morality in a society marred by 'diabolical activities':

It is impossible to write of the miserable state (*adhogati*) of the Gorkha subjects. Unable to watch such heart-rending diabolical activities (*hṛday vidārak paiśāchik karma harū*) [such as washing the clothes of the *ajār*: 3.2.2], the good gentlemen (*bhale sajjan harū*) of Kurseong have made arrangements to make ready a library building for the suppression of such bad tendencies (*kurīti nivāraṇārtha*).

As we have seen in 2.1, Pārasmaṇi and others railed against the low class literature being produced by (as they saw it) amoral Banaras publishers. One direct response to this class of literature which was enthusiastically endorsed by the Darjeeling literary elite was Mahānanda Sāpkoṭā's *Man laharī*, whose second edition (1923) was published by the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan as the third volume in their Jñān Pustak Mālā series.<sup>183</sup> Priced very affordably at 6 paise, it was edited by Sūryavikram, who used the preface to lecture readers on the improving potential of literature, even if composed in a popular rhythm tainted by association with less worthy artistic undertakings. The opening lines of *Man laharī* itself (1923: 1), which give a fair idea of its moralising intent, are as follows:

हे गोरखाली ! चित्त समाली केह भन्छु सुनन ।  
भनेका कुरा पढेर पूरा मनमा गुनन ॥ १ ॥

O Gorkhalis! I say something from the  
soul—listen! Read what I have to say and  
consider it wholeheartedly.

हामि झै ठुला कोह छैनन् होला, बल र बुद्धिमा ।  
तर के शोक हामि झै को छ गरीब शुद्धिमा ॥ २ ॥

There may be none as great as us in strength  
and intellect, but alas! who is as poor as us

<sup>183</sup> The preface explained that the first edition of 500 copies (funded by Lāmā Gokul Munṣī) had been distributed; as it still appeared to be in demand among Nepali people the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan published a second edition. This edition also sold out rapidly (4.4). By 1935, the NSS had completed a fourth print run of 2000 copies, the Sammelan's annual report (NSSP 4(1): 2) noting that its popularity had been demonstrated.

in purity?

बल छ हाम्रो बुद्धि छ राम्रो हाम्रो छ हिम्मत ।  
तै पनि हाम्रो कस्तो नराम्रो भए छ इज्जत ? ॥ ३ ॥

We have strength, good intellect, and  
courage; but still what is the state of our  
honour?

The introduction is followed by a cheerful verse description of two major Hindu festivals: Tīj (pp. 2-3) an observance by Bāhun-Chhetri women, and Daśaiṃ (pp. 4-12). It is notable that these both represent forms of social control: Tīj, in which women fast and pray for the well-being of their husbands, as an expression of patriarchy, Daśaiṃ, later, as Panchayat Nepal's major state-sponsored annual holiday and ritual symbol of national unity. *Man lahari*'s didacticism made it naturally suited to inclusion in textbooks: the appearance of an extract in Pārasmaṇi and Nagendramaṇi Pradhān's simple Nepali reader ([1933] 1944: 23) is a good example of how the school curriculum reinforced the moral messages and propagated them well beyond writers' initial audience. The 'proper' approach to celebrating religious festivals was also a focus of moral concern, one which gained more attention as public celebrations of particular *pūjās* became a highly visible form of community cultural representation (cf. 4.3.1). As the Gorkhā Samiti was preparing its own celebrations for Sarasvatī *pūjā* and Kṛṣṇāṣṭamī, Dharaṇīdhar bemoaned the fact that many people viewed such occasions primarily as an opportunity for feasting and drinking. He reminded the Samiti's members that the true value of these festivals lay in social cohesion (Koirālā 1923: 10): 'What delight can be seen!! The pious Gorkhali brothers all congregate. Leaving behind all worldly cares and gathering with happy faces we remember that we are all children of the one *jagadādhār paramēśvar* and we perform *pūjā* hoping to worship god and further harmony among ourselves.'

However, vices made a more tempting subject than virtues, and one which was better suited to the polemical style of the angry but righteous young men who were at the core of social activism. Speaking at the opening of the Kurseong Gorkha Library building, Dharaṇīdhar took care to define explicitly the four worst social evils. They were, in descending order, drinking, gambling, polygamy and violence, for which ranking he adduced various supporting *slokas* (1919: 63-64). In the conclusion of his speech (*ibid.*: 85-86) he continues to warn the audience against vice and sin and to remind them of the moral value of a library:

This is not just a library, a house in which to pile up books. This is a pure temple in which to worship that supreme being, supreme soul which resides in everyone's heart (*sabkā ghaṭ ghaṭmā rahekā parabrahma paramātmā*). Thus indeed if one comes here and makes a habit of sitting down and reading the life stories of the many great holy souls (*puṇyātmāharū*); if one turns one's thoughts to the realisation of the true purpose of human life by making one's mind pure through bathing it in the pure ocean of thought of other far-sighted and charitable eminent persons; then most certainly it will be for the good of oneself, society, country, king and all.

The library is presented almost as offering a path to salvation and certainly as a locus for improvement that is far from confined to the educational or cultural. Equal to the praise for libraries and the socially beneficial activities they promoted was the harsh criticism reserved for those who stood in the path of such progress. For Dharaṇīdhar too, Rāmkrṣṇa Śarmā sees a moral crusade as the prime motivation for literary engagement. Dharaṇīdhar had arrived in Darjeeling in 1920 following the completion of his studies in Banaras and had the opportunity to observe a cross-section of society: 'there he saw that rather than in education and literature, the Darjeeling Nepali society of that time was sunk in drinking, gambling and adultery'. This was a spur to Dharaṇīdhar: 'as a result, he composed poetry and among the people (*jan samūhkā mājhmā*) he started reading out his poetry with a folk rhythm (Śarmā 1983: 26, 27). The Kurseong Gorkha Library's fifth annual report presents a good example of the self-righteous and heavily moralising tone of these self-appointed guardians of *unnati* and social goodness. Secretary Śeṣ Maṇi recounted (C1(8-9): 35) how he visited a well off man in the hope of receiving some financial assistance. The man turned him down rudely and subsequently ploughed all his money into drink and became an alcoholic: 'The same gentleman who yesterday used such bad language in refusing to give a couple of *paisā* for the benefit of his society today feels not the least embarrassment in making pointless expenditure on this hateful task. We have experienced many examples of this sort ...'

Alongside such specific complaints *Chandrikā* also gave space to more generic discourses on correct behaviour, most of which married a blend of Hindu philosophy—or at least a smattering of *ślokas*—with a moral perspective comfortably in harmony with the Victorian, imperial mainstream. Just as Pārasmaṇi had selected the stolid British virtue of perseverance for the topic of his first published essay ('*Adhyavasāy*'), so did writers in the pages of his journal remind their readers of the benefits of hard work. Thus Maṇi Nārāyaṇ

Pradhān's 'Effort and Work' (1918d), a lengthy improvisation on the theme of 'the devil makes work for idle hands', positions industriousness as a personal duty, a form of transposed Protestant work ethic. This neatly complemented Tārānāth Śarmā's arguments (3.4) on the need for individual and corporate industry in the interests of national economic *unnati*. Other writers preferred to remind their audience of their most basic duties such as honesty, as did 'Phattya' of Nepal with his essay 'Love of Truth' (1918b).

However, it remained the case that the style of writing was almost invariably livelier when there was an individual or class of people to attack. Readers may have grown tired of parting with their subscription money only to find that they themselves were the target of repeated harangues. As *Chandrikā* completed its first year of publication it gave over the frontispiece of its twelfth edition to a letter from the manager to its subscribers. The first paragraph is devoted to fulsome—not to say sycophantic—praise for Chandra Śamśer, 'the ordainer of the fate of the kingdom of Nepal, loving towards his subjects, passionate for learning, desirous of respectfully dedicating body, mind and wealth to the development of the mother tongue'. The vote of thanks offered to readers is conspicuously more ambivalent:

Last month it was respectfully requested of each old subscriber to *Chandrikā* that they should demonstrate their sympathy by signing up a few new subscribers but only a handful of gentlemen have gone to the trouble of increasing the number of subscribers. Other respected subscribers must also make the effort (*kaṣṭa uṭhāunu hunyai chhha*) of signing up new subscribers.

The approach to readers is one of carrot and stick: they are made to feel guilty if they have not put in sufficient effort to increase the readership and are not allowed to forget the suffering of the public-spirited publishers, but on the other hand, they are also offered tantalising rewards if their collective contribution is successful: 'even if the subscribers reach just 500 this year we shall certainly make *Chandrikā* illustrated and increase its size and the number of pages: in this our subscribers must make an effort to increase our zeal rather than being despondent'. In fact, the tone of the manager here is mild when compared to an editorial printed half way through the first year. Then, under the title 'Entreaty' (1(6): 22-23), Pārasmaṇi had asked whose fault it is that so many journals started only to close down almost immediately.

If one considers the answer to this question impartially one must reply 'Gorkha society'. If anyone should ask how this is [they can see that] people did not become subscribers: they considered that even paying a miserable one or two rupees for a journal was like willingly giving money to thieves. Those who have stepped forward to bring profit to society by running journals have themselves profited only by financial loss. Yet they have heard subscribers accusing them of cheating them, of stashing dirty money and not even bringing out whole issues of their journals ...

But subscribers! *Chandrikā* is not in such a state. Nor have we ever hoped to earn any money from this journal. Its main purpose is simply to give some courage to a mother tongue which has reached a miserable condition (*hīn avasthāmā pugekī*). It is for this purpose that we have opened a printing press in Kurseong. The press does its own work and in its spare time also prints *Chandrikā*. For the time being *Chandrikā* only has to bear the costs of paper, stamps and a few basic expenses. Enthusiastic, worthy customers are also giving five or ten rupees' assistance. For a journal such as this to run only dependent on subscribers is not only difficult but impossible. But because from various places we have received (and continue to receive) assistance beyond the basic two rupees [annual subscription] and because we do not have to pay cash for the printing this journal cannot be closed. But it is only through the enthusiasm of subscribers, with each subscriber desiring to bring along with them their friends and acquaintances,<sup>184</sup> that this journal can hope to bring about any benefit for society at large (*duniyām*).

Here, as in exhortations to abandon vice and devote oneself to projects for society's *unnati* it may not be an exaggeration to detect an element of coercion. The forceful conviction of dedicated writers and social activists could translate into an occasionally bullying self-righteousness. Authority was claimed in areas ranging from religion and morality to aesthetics and orthography. It is only interesting that the zeal for social reform did not more often tempt its proponents into open engagement with wider political questions such as self-rule and democracy. In the meantime a readership left with limited opportunities for creative participation and subject to sporadic criticism for its inadequacies could perhaps be forgiven for turning to the uncomplicated pleasures of *laharī* literature.

### 3.5. The place of women: subjects and objects

Women were not entirely without a voice in the formation of Nepali public discourse, as a particularly bold essay in *Chandrikā* by Śrīmatī Kumudinī discussed below (4.4.2) emphasises. However, early Nepali writing paints a picture not so much of women's increasing independence and assertion of agency as of consistent efforts to reinforce a traditional subsidiary position for them within the household and society. While it is essential to analyse the activities of women as subjects, claiming an active role in writing or

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<sup>184</sup> A notice of thanks indicated that sixteen gentlemen had brought in new readers.

other cultural realms, the way in which they were objectified by male (and female) writers is revealing of entrenched social attitudes. This section rediscovers the contributions of various neglected women writers, and examines the differences of opinion between them, as well as the way in which feminine values, and perceived foibles, became the subject of social commentary. Unfortunately, the materials which would assist a study of this nature are very scarce: not only is evidence from journals and books limited, but few secondary sources shed any light on women's writing or offer biographical details of the contributors to journals detailed here. By the mid 1930s, Hariprasād Pradhān (1935: 71), addressing Darjeeling's Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, claimed that 'considering the Nepali language answers in the matriculation examinations given my male and female students in the last couple of years, one understands that in our society it is women who have performed more service to Nepali literature.' Yet he did not expand on this assertion, nor comment on the fact that the Sammelan's fifty-five registered members included only a solitary woman (Chandrakumārī Devī, *Figure 4-2*, p. 215). And, as in previous meetings, there were no women speakers to address the audience.

The subject of education for women was a theme which surfaced repeatedly in early journals and publications, often inspired by developments in the outside world. For example, 'Women's education' (C1(2): 23) reported on Kaṭhiyāvāḍ-Gomḍal's introduction of compulsory education for girls in every village with a school.<sup>185</sup> By 1910, there was at least one primer aimed specifically at female students: *Pradhān sundarī śikṣā* by Ratan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (of *Premlaharī* fame), a slim volume published by the author in only 250 copies, described (*SP*) as a 'Nepali reader for girls'. Debate on the necessity and appropriateness of education for women encompassed extremes of thought that recall the tensions between progressive and conservative interpretations of *unnati* investigated in 3.4. The first issue of *Chandra* (1(1): 11-17) set the tone with a lengthy unsigned essay titled 'Bālā vinod' ('Amusement for young women'). This was not, however, designed to tempt women into revelry as its subtitle, 'the *dharma* of married women', makes clear. The essay

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<sup>185</sup> This was a new development: *Sundarī* did not include a single report on women's education, although occasional news items (as in 1(11-12) and 2(1)) highlighted *pativrata* virtues (as did *Mādhavī*, e.g. 1(2): 40-41).

is a resolutely traditionalist detailing of women's duties to their husbands, dealing in depth with subjects such as *pativratā dharma*, the duties of a faithful and devoted wife. Paṇḍit Devarāj Upādhyāya's 'Dialogue between a father and daughter' (1915) offers some similarity. In this poem a father goes to great lengths to persuade his daughter that she must study for her own good much as she just wants to play and refuses to see the point of learning. As the father's argument develops, however, it becomes clear (1915: 23) that the message is not as progressive as it seems at first sight:

पती कने दैव समान जाननू ।	Know your husband to be equal to a god,
जूठो त मिष्टान्न भनेर ठाननू ॥	Think of his leftovers as sweets;
प्रिया पतीको जसरी त हुन्छ नी ।	Just as the beloved belongs to her husband
पढेर जानिन्छ सबै कुरा इनी ॥ ५ ॥	She may learn all these things by reading.

Such sentiments were still not confined to men, as Śrīmatī Yogmāyā Devī's essay on 'Women's Education' demonstrates. Again, the opening of her argument (1918: 7) suggests a progressive polemic: she bemoaned the fact that Hindu women were not given education and so could not read the scriptures. This she attributed to men's fear that educated women would become too independent and social structures would break down. Yet she was quick to assuage this fear, arguing that one should not imagine that literacy alone would make women independent. In fact (*ibid.*: 8), she reiterated Upādhyāya's conviction that teaching girls to read can only assist in the maintenance of religious and domestic order. Her advice was identifiably Brahmanical, for example noting that it is impossible to stop boys and girls eating onions and garlic just by ordering them: far better is to enable them to read the textual justifications for themselves. And while she concluded that 'one should not marry at a very young age', she was emphatic that boys should be married after sixteen, and girls between the ages of ten and twelve. Following marriage, it would be the responsibility of mothers-in-law to give daughters-in-law good training, a process much facilitated if both were educated in the scriptures (*ibid.*: 9).

For all of these writers, female literacy provided a convenient tool for the transmission of authorised learning that reinforced existing social structures.<sup>186</sup> Such attitudes were not

<sup>186</sup> Possibly the first Nepali woman to be published in Banaras was a 'Mrs Narayani', described as the author of the Hitachintak Press's *Bhakti rivardhanī rāgmālā* (1899). Its small run of 250 copies suggests that it may have been a vanity publication; 'Mrs Narayani' may also have been a pseudonym.

quickly overcome: an advertisement on the back cover of the first issue of the *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā* (1931) remarked of Bhānubhakta's *Vadhūśikṣā* ('The education of brides') that 'it is absolutely essential (*atyanta āvaśyak*) that this work should have sufficient currency among women'. The prime example of such a didactic treatise was, however, the work of another woman, Durgādevī Āchārya Dīkṣit, whose dense monograph *The Duties of Wives (An ideal wife)* (1914) was published by the Bombay-based Gorkhā Grantha Prachārak Maṇḍalī. This lengthy (144 page) work on women's responsibilities towards their husbands is intensely academic and pedantic. The central material is drawn primarily from extensively—and impressively thoroughly and accurately—quoted, translated, paraphrased and footnoted Sanskrit texts, with a few snippets of English poetry and platitudes thrown in for good measure. Compared to most other Nepali books of the time, it was remarkably well printed and professional in terms of layout and content. But this is perhaps not surprising for a woman as well connected as Durgādevī. She was the youngest daughter-in-law of Sāgnichit Somayājī Paṇḍit Śiromaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit and this must also account for some of her conservative outlook: as Dīkṣit (1979/80: 1) puts it, 'the society of Nepali women certainly didn't receive from her the call to tear the veil of society and take their place on the stage of the world ... she couldn't be called progressive according to today's definition'. Dīkṣit (*ibid.*) observes that it is, however, surprising that while enjoying Bombay life she was also thinking of the state of Nepali women.<sup>187</sup>

One wonders how many Nepali women would have had the patience and the willingness to grapple with the profusion of *śāstra* references to read it all. The essence of the work is summed up in its passionate opening sentences (1914: 1): 'The main *dharma* of women is *pātivratya*. If a woman lacks *pātivratyadharmā* then her life is cursed, miserable, contemptible (*dhikkṛt chha, nyakkṛt chha, thuk chha*)!'. She is well aware (*ibid.*: 6) of the poverty of education among women—'the pitiful state of one's fellow countrywomen (*svadeśkā strījāti*) these days is beyond description ... currently we women are in a deep darkness of lack of learning'—but sees the solution of education as primarily helping to

<sup>187</sup> Dīkṣit (personal communication) now asserts that this book was written by her husband. If this is the case then this work must be read as a further comment on male interpretations of female duty.

reinforce traditional values: 'the *dharma* of dutiful, charitable, and *unnati*-wishing men is to teach us, and by giving us education to make us capable of upholding *sanātan dharma*, and *dharma* in society and the family.' She noted (*ibid.*: 8) that despite ancient texts on women's duties being available, modern readers could not understand them and she was shocked to discover that not a single useful book on such topics had been produced in Nepali. 'It seems this was because of my own short-sightedness! Because I could not even imagine that in such an independent Hindu kingdom there could be a small lack such as this.' She claimed to have wanted also to include duties of husband in this volume but her stated aim was to produce a book 'for reading by women (*strīpāṭhya*)', thus emphasising its separation from mainstream literature. Still, this was the first significant writing by a Nepali woman since Lalitatripurāsundarī Devī, the wife of Raṇa Bahādur Śāh who had written a four hundred page prose book, *Rājadharmā*, more than seventy years previously: for Dīkṣit (1979/80: 1), 'in 1914 another Nepali learned woman amazed Nepalis by her appearance in the world of the Nepali language.' A more vigorous debate about education was started by the contribution of a woman writer identified only as 'a Nepali woman Sukeśī'. Her poem 'Women's education' (1914: 24) was a direct call to arms:<sup>188</sup>

सुन बा ! सुन कोहि मेरि नानी ! । अब ता व्यर्थ नफाल  
जिन्दगानी ।

गर उन्नति को सदैव काम । रहला उच्च भयी पछाडि  
नाम ॥

पढ शास्त्र महौं लगाउ ध्यान । अबला हूँ भनि कसै न  
ठान ॥

जड बुद्धि निकाल दूर सार । गर लायी मन देश को  
सुधार ॥

सब छौ बल बुद्धि मा समान । सब लाई सब को छँदै छ  
ज्ञान ॥

अब ता न सुनाउ आर्तनाद । गर आफैँ मन मा बर  
विवाद ॥

ऋतु ता फिरदैछ बेर बेर । तर फर्केन कसै गरी उमेर ॥

Listen! Listen my daughters! Now don't  
throw you life away pointlessly;  
Always work towards improvement: your  
name will be elevated and live on afterwards.

Read and turn your attention to the *śāstras*:  
let not anyone think she is powerless.  
Remove your senseless minds and put them  
away from you; devote your hearts to  
reforming the country.

You are all equal in strength and  
intelligence; you all have knowledge of  
everything.  
Now do not cry in distress but rather debate  
yourselves within your heart.

The seasons carry on turning, time after time

<sup>188</sup> Bhaṭṭarāī (1988/89: 316 fn.) claims that a 1917 letter from D.N. Śarmā to Harisīṃh Thāpā attributes these contributions to Śambhuprasād, who was apparently seeking to stimulate debate.

न गँवाउ उसै अमूल्य काल । लियि शिक्षा, जड बुद्धि  
लाइ फाल ॥

but one's age can never go back;  
Don't just waste precious time: take  
education and throw away your senseless  
minds.

A first—positive—response to Śukeśī's appeal appeared in the 'Vividh viṣay' section of the next issue, where Navinā Devī (*Chandra* 1(5): 23) endorsed her arguments in ornate prose:

Dear friends! And dear younger sisters! Today it is with great joy that I give a crore of thanks from my heart to the honourable devotee of duty, Śrīmatī Sukeśī Devī. I dedicate these humble words to the lotus-feet of our mother tongue-loving brothers and sisters and also address my dear younger sisters in a loud voice: Sisters! The gateway to our bright sunrise which had been closed through fearsome difficulties of circumstance (*bhīṣaṅ saṅkaṭ*) has now, through the unwavering courage of Śrīmatī Sukeśī Devī (*jay hos!*), opened. Sisters! Now there is not the least need to be embarrassed: one's writing and one's heartfelt feelings can be published immediately.

This support for Sukeśī is noteworthy both for its enthusiasm and for the fact that Navinā Devī clearly believed that there was a significant female readership of *Chandra* worth addressing through its pages, as is perhaps confirmed by the continuation of discussion in the next issue. However, this continuation came in the form of a determinedly conservative rejoinder from Śrīmatī Anasūyā (who described herself in parentheses as 'the wife of B.P. Śarmā'). Her poem was also titled 'Strī śikṣā' but it took the opposite line to Sukeśī, as the first two verses (1915: 11) demonstrate:

सुन नानि ! सुकेशि ! चित्त लायी । तिमिले अर्ति दियौ  
ठूलो मलाई ॥

पढछु सब काम लाइ छोडी । सबला बन्दछु जोडि लाइ  
तोडी ॥ १ ॥

अब भात पकाइ पात गाँसी । घर पीतेर सबै कसेर  
नासी ॥

कपडा सिइ बत्ति काति काम । चलने छैन लिनेछु शास्त्रि  
नाम ॥ २ ॥

Listen, child Sukeśī! Pay attention! You  
have given me great inspiration:

Abandoning all my work I study; I make  
myself strong by breaking my marriage.

Now as for cooking rice, stringing leaves,  
smearing [fresh mud on] the house, all this  
is destroyed;

Sewing clothes and twisting wicks: these  
jobs will not be done for I am becoming a  
*śāstrī*.

The dispute did not, sadly, develop into a wider debate of the issues. Perhaps constrained by the verse format, or perhaps reflecting the tiredness of *Chandra*—which was increasingly dependent on translations from other journals to fill its pages—neither Sukeśī, Anasūyā, nor any of their supporters chose to press home their point of view (nor

even, if some of the contributions were the work of Śambhuprasād, did he choose to continue his prompting of debate). The last word went to Sukeśī but her reply—presented with presumably mock humility as the ‘Petition’ (1915) of ‘an ignorant girl’—was long-winded (39 verses) and lacking in passion. The subject was not taken up by *Chandrikā*, although one unsigned story (‘Gupta śikṣā’, appearing serially from 2(5), possibly a translation) opened with a discussion about women’s education. One remarkable learned contribution by another woman writer a few years later was Ambalikā Devī’s *Nepālko itihās* (1922/23). What little is known of this author is through her male relatives: she was the daughter of Subbā Ekakṛṣṇa Nepāl, wife of Patna High Court advocate Ambikāprasād Upādhyāya, and her brother-in-law Īśvarīprasād Śarmā, owner of the General Trading Company, published her later *Rājput ramaṇī* (1932). This historical novel, modelled on successful exponents of the genre in Hindi and Bengali, was a pioneering work for Nepali.<sup>189</sup> Nevertheless, Ambalikā Devī does not feature in literary histories and other details on her life are not available. That her male relatives are less obscure is significant: even as women were entering the world of print as authors in their own right, their family connections (primarily husbands and fathers) conditioned both their ability to publish and the way in which they have been remembered, or rather forgotten.

Early writing by and about women was more usually concerned with the definition and depiction of an ideal of womanhood, not least an ideal that was in concord with the growing prominence of motherhood in rhetoric about language (*mātrbhāṣā*) and country (*mātrbhūmi*). As *Chandra* was being published during the First World War, many ideal women would be playing a supportive role to their husbands away at war. Rather than joining battle with Sukeśī and Anasūyā, a woman writer identified only as Kādambinī is more concerned with devoting herself to her husband’s martial honour. In a lengthy poem

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<sup>189</sup> I have not been able to see these works. They are briefly mentioned by Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 231-32), who also provides the basic facts presented here. Bhaṭṭarāī (*NLK*: 60-61) attributes the history to her husband but agrees that she was the first woman novelist in Nepali; he also records that she died young.

of twelve six-line stanzas, ‘The courage of a brave [man’s] wife’ (1915: 1),<sup>190</sup> she urges her husband on to bravery and glory:

न मानि शोच हे प्रभो ! लडाञ्चि गर्न जानु होस् ।  
नृपेन्द्र फियथ जार्ज को बिपत्ति हेर्न जानु होस् ॥

Do not feel sadness, my lord! Go to make war!  
Go to see the disastrous state of the emperor  
George V!

विपक्ष सैन्य छन् जती सबै गई बिताउनुोस् ।  
प्रतापि बीर गोरखा भनी कहाइ आजनुोस् ॥

However many soldiers are on the other side,  
go and finish them off! Come back when you  
have earned your name as a glorious, brave  
Gorkha.

बृटीश राज्य को ठूलो जय ध्वजा हिलाउनुोस् ।  
घमंड साथ देश को घमंड राखि आओस् ॥ १ ॥

Unfurl the great victory flag of the British  
kingdom! Come proudly when you have  
established the country’s pride!

Other women writers also adopted reflected the mainstream concerns of the dominant rhetoric. Śrīmatī Modinī (1918) offered her ‘Best Wishes’ to *Chandrikā*, congratulating the journal on its establishment and its encouraging appearance. Her purple prose—such as her hopes that *Chandrikā* might cool the overheated brow of lovers of learning left bereft by the disappearance of *Gorkhālī*—was rounded off with a brief, awkwardly phrased poem encompassing some of the central themes of *vidyā*, *unnati* and *jāti*-building. Elsewhere, at least one woman also turned her hand to translation from Bengali: Śrīmatī Pārbatī Devī translated Bābu Jaldhar Sen’s (1918) modern short story ‘A lawyer’s fate’. These various examples demonstrate that from an early stage there was a significant number of women—albeit in a minimal ratio to men—who were active in a wide range of types of writing. Yet as time went by, *Chandrikā* focused increasingly on historical stories of great women (comparable to the *vīrāṅganās* of Hindi literature; see Orsini 2002: 208-224) rather than on dealing with issues related to contemporary women. Women writers also made fewer appearances although again—as with *Chandra*—later issues featured much less new writing in general, and became increasingly dependent on lengthy translations. The invocation of traditional ideals was started by Maṅṣiṃh Guruṅ of Shillong, who was to become the most renowned Nepali writer, editor and social activist of his generation in Northeast India. His subject was ‘Mahārānī Svarṇamayī’ (1918b), a charitable aristocrat

<sup>190</sup> Pārasmaṇi performed this poem dramatically while at school, wearing women’s clothes and brandishing a *khukurī* (Pradhān 1991: 25-26, Pradhan 1997: 9).

who made numerous important donations to educational institutions and social causes. A series of similar historical stories about great women started to appear from *Chandrikā* 2(2) onwards.<sup>191</sup> They may have owed their appearance in the journal to convenient space-filling as much as any perceived literary or moral merit. Nonetheless, the opening to the first such tale, that of ‘Rānī Kiraṇmayī’ (C2(2): 39; the story was continued serially in later issues) makes a transparent attempt to place contemporary discussion of women within a historical perspective of paragons of feminine virtue:

Nowadays all sorts of opinions are being expressed on the subject of women but India is not a place in whose history one can only with great difficulty find a few tales of characters. It is a place where from the very beginnings of history one can find the life stories of countless pure, religious women (*asaṃkhyā satī sādhvīharūko charitra*) fully recorded.

It was again, however, the prospect of criticising lax social customs that inspired one writer to more innovative use of language. Apparently alarmed by the subversion of ideal womanhood, Chet’s ‘To Nepali women’ displayed both a fear of modernity and an awareness that it can be exploited for national benefit. He managed to combine a gentle satire laced with English vocabulary in a style more appropriate to *laharī* poetry with classical allusions, such as to the concentration of *tapasyā*-performing *munis* being broken by beautiful *apsarās*.<sup>192</sup> This poem (1918: 6) offers a male perspective on the ambivalent allure of modish Nepali women, his mockery not sufficient to conceal his awareness of a dangerous sexuality:

(३) कसै कसैले सुखाल माथी  
घुँडा तलक् ‘कोट’ ठुलो झुलायो ।  
कस्यौ कसैले कठि ‘कॉर्सलेट’ ले

Some of you above your *suruvāl* have swung  
a large ‘coat’ down to your knees;  
Some of you—poor things!— use a ‘corselet’

<sup>191</sup> Further such historical accounts follow in subsequent issues: ‘Rānī Prabhāvatī’ from 2(3), ‘Rānakdevī’ from 2(4), ‘Padminī’, a tale from 12th century Chittaur, from 2(5). As they were all serialised, they overlapped and made up significant proportions of *Chandrikā*’s content in its second year: ‘Padminī’ accounted for all but two pages of its final issue (2(8)). Nagendra Maṇi Pradhān (interview, 19 June 2001) claims that these were all translated from Hindi originals by Pārasmaṇi but they seem to have been the work of Tārānāth Śarmā; according to Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1993/94: 229) they were collected in his *Bhāratīya devīharūko charitra* (1919/20).

<sup>192</sup> The invasion of English terminology into descriptions of women could be unpredictable. The sudden appearance of the English ‘earring’ in Śikharnāth’s traditional depiction of Sarasvatī (1913: inside cover) strikes a jarring—though perhaps intentionally humorous—note: ‘With bracelets, anklets and “earring”, wearing a pearl necklace/she is come mounted on a swan to give the gift of learning.’ Is Śikharnāth ironically hinting at the increasing influence of British rule and the English language on new models of learning?

‘गाउन्’ र ‘ब्लौस्’ को महिमा बढायौ ॥

to increase the glory of your ‘gown’ and  
‘blouse’.

(४) सबै पुराना गहना हटायौ  
ढाँचा परेका गहना बनायौ ।  
‘स्लिपर्स’ कसै ले ‘बुट’ भो कसैले  
‘पम्प शू’ सबैले मन खुब् परायौ ॥

Throwing away all your old jewellery, you  
have made stylish jewellery;  
For some it’s ‘slippers’, for some it’s ‘boots’  
but all of you are keen on ‘pump shoes’.

(५) विद्या लगारी अपराध डाक्यौ  
योगेशको भंग समाधि पारचौ ।  
आफू हरू लाइ गुलाम ठान्यौ  
भाई हरू लाइ पनी बिगारी ॥

By chasing away learning you have invited  
crime, you have broken the meditative  
concentration of the great sages;  
you have thought yourselves to be roses, even  
spoiling your own brothers.

(६) विदेश ज्यादा मनले रूचायौ  
स्वदेशको स्नेह सबै हटायौ ।  
गिन्ती घटायौ, बिपदा बढायौ  
देशोन्नतिको त जरै कटायौ ॥

At heart you much prefer foreign lands:  
you’ve abandoned all love for your own  
country.  
You’ve reduced the reckoning, and increased  
misfortunes; you’ve cut off the *unnati* of the  
country at its very roots.

Ajīt ‘Nirāsā’ (1976: 17) also cites a verse from Ratan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān’s *Nīti kusum* which implies a familiar suspicion of female sexuality. This may seem bizarre given his romantic *Premlaharī* (2.3.1) but perhaps illustrates how Nepali writers, like their Hindi contemporaries, could maintain multiple moral frameworks related to literary *saṃskāras* for different contexts:

हे प्यारी बहिनी नगर्नु जगमा  
गर्वै-अहंकार कति

Dear younger sister, do not display any pride  
and arrogance in this world.

राम्रो छु रूपकी भुल्याउने मै हूँ  
भन्छिन् मनैमा यही

I am beautiful, I am one who can beguile,  
says this [girl] to herself.

In his ‘Description of a courtesan’,<sup>193</sup> Śambhuprasād Dhuṅgyāl was also drawn to consideration of feminine allure but he is not intent on condemning the dangerously

<sup>193</sup> The Nepali title is ‘Veśyā varṇaṇ’. ‘Veśyā’ is normally translated as ‘prostitute’ but this style of *śṛigār* description has its roots in a lengthy tradition of depicting women trained in the arts of musical entertainment as well as seduction, for whom the term courtesan is more appropriate, especially in its obsolescence. Bhaṭṭarāī (1980/81) misdates this poem to 1926/27. *SP* show it was published by Viśvarāj Harihar in 1,000 copies in December 1915, describing it as a ‘metrical description of prostitutes. A book showing the defects of prostitution.’

seductive woman so much as praising her and admitting his helpless enthrallment.<sup>194</sup> Of interest is his subversion of the established register for *nakhśikh* description: his wholesale use of English vocabulary forces his editor (Bhaṭṭarāi 1980/81: 2) to concede that the linguistic mix is a *khichadī* style, and again suggests a link between modern, urban, English-mediated life and a revision of sexual mores. Questions of the control and enjoyment of female sexuality are also raised by the promotion of Rāmprasād Satyāl's Nepali *Sachitra kokaśāstra* (an illustrated treatise on sex advertised on the back cover of his *Saṃsār ko ānanda* (1921), which offers 'names of the conditions of women, the objects they like, the signs of the eight *nāyikās*, means to regulate conception at will, the rules of union with women, the inner secrets of positions, types of kiss ... many invigorating and famous medicines of *vaidya* doctors.' While some of the subject matter, such as contraceptive methods, might be of interest to women themselves, its contents appear designed to titillate a male audience ('descriptions of the behaviour of women from home and abroad'), and one that could afford the high price of Rs 2 per copy.<sup>195</sup>

Against this background, one of the more radical pleas for a revision of attitudes to women came from Dharaṇīdhar (1923: 5): 'Have we considered at all that *jāti unnati* may come about through respect of womankind? Here praise of *satī-sādhvīs* is of no use.' He urges his audience instead to consider the plight of women who are deprived of education and therefore unable to uphold their honour when destroyed by the bad conduct of others. His warning that men of other *jātis* are carrying off Nepali girls, by theft or adultery (*chorī jāri gardai*) foreshadowed the public response to the Rāj Kumārī case (see glossary), as well as demonstrating that his stated concern for 'arousing the pride of self-respect' among women was closely related to the honour of Nepali men. Nevertheless, his emphasis that 'for the reform of womankind it is the need for organised society (*saṃgaṭhit samāj*) that is clear' (*ibid.*: 5-6) implies a more progressive and proactive social agenda than that

<sup>194</sup> He has moved on from the misogynist tones of his moralising 'Upadeś laharī', for example (1906/07: 241): 'Pay no attention to women, who are a heap of shit, piss and excrement (*guhū mūt malko thupro*)/but now joyfully sing *bhajans* to Śaṅkar'.

<sup>195</sup> The *Kokaśāstra* is described as in print and due to be released shortly: publishers Viśvarāj Harihar were already taking orders for immediate despatch on publication. I have not seen the book so cannot confirm its contents; it may have been the basis for 'Śrīeka' (1938).

proposed by the writers of historical tales. These themes were, however, not consistently developed. In later Darjeeling journals, the condition of women only resurfaced with an essay in *Nebulā* on 'The worrying condition of women' by Śānti Devī of Siliguri, which described the ongoing trafficking of Nepali girls. She claimed that there was now 'a regular trade in Nepali girls' (1935: 6), and that careful observation at various railheads would reveal at least a couple of cases of abduction each day. Even so, her final appeal to Nepali men—'come forward, remembering that the protection of your sisters is your supreme duty: the shame of your sisters is in your own hands'—appears to underline the powerlessness of women themselves in terms of social organisation.

We have thus observed that the public sphere was not wholly closed to women. Even from the early days of the publishing business in Banaras they had been seen as part of the potential market (2.2) and certain women came to make important contributions to print discourse in journals and independent publications. Yet dissenting voices were drowned out by proponents of conservative ideologies; once again, those who would exploit the public sphere as an arena for radical challenge had to confront those who wished to exploit it as a tool for the imposition of normative values. Equally, writing *by* women as agents and subjects was outweighed by writing *on* women as subjects for male writers who continued to impose their own depictions of idealised femininity. Despite occasional progressive sparks, the lack of space for women in the Nepali discursive sphere appears accurately to reflect their low profile in social organisations and political activity.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

The detailed presentation and analysis of writing on *vidyā* and *unnati* presented in this chapter is intended both to illustrate the formation of a particular style of rhetoric and to demonstrate some of the complexities and contradictions contained within a seemingly homogeneous discourse. It has revisited the role of early Nepali journals in creating a functional discursive arena, examined the definition of key terms and the varied significance they acquired, looked at the repeated articulation of a sense of backwardness as a central motivation for progress, observed the emergence of rhetorical and practical positioning of mother tongue development as a project indivisible from wider social improvement; and

finally attempted to highlight and account for some of the diversity within this process, and its conditioning by morally normative constructions of literature and society. The themes developed here were fundamental to emerging Nepali public culture and they formed the framework within which debate in journals of this period took place. More importantly, journals for the first time provided a viable forum for the exploration of concepts of self, community and identity, a forum that initially allowed the experimental articulation of a Nepali *jāti* and its needs for development. It is the embodiment of this concept and its delimitation, through the institutionalisation of the Nepali language, cultural, social and political organisations, that forms the focus of the next chapter.

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## Chapter 4

### Building and bounding the public sphere: institutionalisation and exclusion

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#### 4.1. Background

The foregoing chapters have attempted to demonstrate the emergence of a Nepali print-based discursive sphere which enabled the propagation of a rhetoric of social progress and reform. Significant questions arise as to the scope and functioning of this sphere, and these can be reduced to two major areas. First, how were the abstract concerns of intellectual discourse translated into practical action? To what extent were rhetorical priorities embodied in Nepali social, cultural and political institutions? Second, how representative was the emergent public sphere? Did it have the capacity to involve a wide social spectrum or was it inherently narrow-based and exclusive? Investigation of these issues is essential to establishing the relevance of this thesis as a whole: this chapter argues that while participation in the public sphere was severely restricted, it nevertheless exerted an increasing influence over Nepali society as a whole and gradually opened its doors to a new class of participant. Furthermore, analysis of the patterns of social inclusion and exclusion reveals the emergence of an increasingly assertive middle class which sought to realign hierarchy within Nepali society. This chapter involves a shift of geographical focus, primarily from Banaras to Darjeeling, which reflects the influence of diverse environments. Darjeeling's Nepali community was differently constituted to that of Banaras (see 1.2.2 and Appendix 1) and the fact that Nepalis there formed the majority of the population is significant when compared to Banaras Nepalis' position as a small minority within an established dominant culture (to which most in any case subscribed as Sanskrit students, practising or trainee priests, or *kāśīvāsīs*). The relatively recent migrants to Darjeeling were

able to write their culture on a fairly clean slate, Darjeeling itself being a new settlement and almost all residents—Nepalis and others—being immigrants of the first, second or third generations. They shared an often conscious awareness that they could build a new form of society and reshape models of authority. This also affected their implementation of *unnati* projects, which targeted recognition through local government and official institutions such as the state education sector more actively than similar efforts in Banaras.

This chapter opens with a discussion of the institutionalisation of the Nepali language. Language was much more than simply a medium for the transmission of ideas: it became a territory for the contestation of cultural authority and control, a symbol of community recognition, and provided the means for fixing and propagating some fundamentals of Nepali identity. These processes took place through debates over language standardisation (addressed separately in 5.2.2), campaigns to gain official recognition for the language, and its deployment in early textbooks. The discursive public sphere came to be embodied in varied institutions and—despite the restrictions of Rāṅā Nepal or British India—to engage in politics. Preceding chapters have examined the foundations upon which the public sphere was constructed—from patterns of migration and settlement to the economic and cultural dynamics of a Nepali print-capitalism—and some of the dominant streams of discussion which it enabled. The section on social, cultural and political institutionalisation supplements this textual-critical-rhetorical analysis with an analysis of the organisational developments which gave concrete shape to the Nepali public sphere.

Most of these developments share common features. First, the institutionalisation described here may have had a wide impact across the Nepali community but control of it remained in the hands of a limited number of people. Second, active participation and leadership in Nepali institutions in India demonstrated the increasing value of formal education and professional qualification over birth and ethnic or caste origin. Third, as in discourse, patterns of Nepali institutionalisation were conditioned by events and influences in other parts of India, and by relations with the British regime which varied from patronage to protest. Importantly, each Nepali organisation enabled in its own fashion the demonstration of a public face of a nascent Nepaliness. Such public faces may on occasion have been directed at the outside world, as the political agenda of the All-India Gorkha

League suggests, but were of greater significance within the Nepali community. Institutions that took root in India enabled Nepalis to conceptualise and constitute themselves as a united community that could find expression through cultural and political organisation more or less independent of government. Here there is a major difference from the situation within Nepal, where comparable developments—such as the founding of the *Gorkhāpatra* and the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti—were primarily an expression of governmental will.

An inevitable concomitant of the emergence of a more concrete and precisely defined conception of Nepaliness was the parallel development of new paradigms of exclusion. The tensions between inclusive and exclusive tendencies during the development of a Nepali public sphere were played out across a range of categories. Furthermore, an inherent tension in the functionality of the public sphere itself—between normative and critical tendencies—found expression in various areas. Thus questions of membership and agency were entwined with issues of power and control, the definition of identity markers and community characteristics marked by descriptive and prescriptive approaches. The fundamental criteria for membership of the Nepali *jāti* were caste and ethnicity: however much Nepaliness might reflect a supra-ethnic formation, entry to its component parts remained primarily dependent on birth within a prescribed set of ancestries. However, participation in public life and the chance to contribute to the further definition and development of Nepali culture was conditioned by more subtle factors. Class and socio-economic status affected both social relations and an individual's ability to act as a member of a market economy. Success in business could buy access to cultural power, for example through sponsoring publications or exercising leverage as a major donor to public funds or organisations. Educational status and perceived cultural accomplishment could be used as a basis for promoting those who might otherwise have had a lesser voice or for ruthlessly excluding from control of institutions those seen as intellectually inadequate. The final section of this chapter examines the ways in which dynamics of exclusion from public culture were developed, starting with an analysis of the composition of early Nepali civil society. This small core of the wider community established its authority through both traditional social hierarchy and the new capital of formal education. Access to active

participation in this limited circle of culturally productive people was neither closed—the key activist Pārasmaṇi, for example, established himself by study and industry rather than high birth—nor completely open. This section proceeds to investigate the lines of exclusion drawn by both educational and cultural elitism, and the attempt to establish normative standards of moral purity and social order.

#### **4.2. Education: recognition, consolidation, propagation**

The development of Nepali education was related to questions of language standardisation and authority that are examined in 5.2.2. While activists established the primacy of public debate and endorsement as the basis for advancing the codification of Nepali, the power to enforce and propagate one's viewpoint remained unevenly distributed. Just as discussion over usage had to make reference to established centres of authority, so too the approval of the literary-inclined public sphere could not be guaranteed to translate into influential practice. A major impetus for the standardisation process was the fact that Nepali's promoters had to exploit new methods for its propagation. The power of mass print production, and the need for even pulp fiction publishers to acknowledge public concern over language usage, has already been noted. Of even greater long term significance was the arrival of new systems of formal education which afforded hitherto undreamed of opportunities to earn official status for Nepali and to disseminate preferred varieties of the language itself and associated cultural indicators.

##### **4.2.1. Rediscovering early Nepali textbooks and teaching methods**

A survey of educational opportunities for Nepalis in either India or Nepal at the start of the period of study indicates very few formal institutions. In Nepal only the Darbar School and, latterly, Trichandra College, offered western-styled education; in the Darjeeling area there were some schools but severe limitations (for example, even a sizeable settlement such as Kalimpong did not have a government high school); in Banaras there were, however, numerous schools and also a university. Yet a history of Nepali education must also take account of other locations and methods of learning. Foremost among these are the varieties of Sanskrit *pāṭhśālās* which existed both within Nepal and in large numbers in Banaras: effectively limited to male Brāhmaṇ students, and offering a primarily religious

curriculum, they nevertheless ensured the literacy of large numbers of Brāhmaṇ Nepalis, as well as their familiarity with topics such as grammar, astrology, etc.<sup>196</sup> Such subjects reached beyond the student bodies: as 2.3.2 has shown, these topics and the many reworkings of themes from the *śāstras* and *purāṇas* gained circulation through countless mainstream publications. Apart from these avenues of formal schooling for children, there were also literacy opportunities for adults through work, for example as clerks on Darjeeling tea estates or in the army. Even within Kathmandu, opportunities were perhaps not as limited as the lack of named teaching institutions implies.

In his memoirs, Mohandhvj Basnet (1986/87: 8-9) paints an amusing picture of teacher-pupil relations just before the First World War in a local class in Indrachok, central Kathmandu. He illustrates that the behaviour of Kathmandu boys was not far removed from others the world over and their commitment to limited rote-learning was distinctly limited. Not surprisingly, Basnet questions the value of such an education, from which boys would graduate straight into the army. Learning was not an important criterion in securing government employment: as he puts it, 'one would also get a job just by saying that one was from the old *bhāradār* Basnet family of Indrachok'. Accustomed to British Indian levels of bureaucracy, BP Koirala was shocked when appointed home minister in 1951 to discover the lack of rudimentary official structures under the Rāṇās.<sup>197</sup> Nonetheless, minimal as the reach of Rāṇā government may have been, it did require a class of

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<sup>196</sup> One such was the Śrī Chandramāṇik Pāṭhśālā in Sirāhā, built with local contributions and assistance from Śrī 3 Mahārājā, whose opening was announced in *Chandrikā* (1(5): 20): 'Readers! The efforts of the residents of Sirāhā have been successful. There is nothing in the world that cannot be achieved by industry. And why should the promotion of education not be successful? Now friends of your country, brave Gorkhas! Let us all arise, raise contributions from various places, and open many schools, libraries, etc. The government will also provide full assistance and enthusiasm. Our greatest duty is this, our greatest *dharma* is this.' Such schools did offer some education in Nepali. A few months later *Chandrikā* (1(10-11): inside frontispiece) reported on more new developments: 'There was a lack of education in the country of Nepal but now ... arrangements have reportedly been made to open 61 *pāṭhśālās* with teaching in the vernacular for three classes and also five schools. For us Nepali subjects could there be any more joyful news than this?'

<sup>197</sup> Koirala discovered that there had been no ministry or department of home affairs under the Rāṇās: decisions were made by the commander-in-chief Babar Śamśer as head of the Mulukī Aḍḍā. Having turned a couple of rooms in the government guest house where he was living into a makeshift office, Koirala (2001: 132-33) approached him for help: 'I asked him who his secretary was. "We never had a secretary," he relied. "The petitions would come up, and I would pass my orders there and then. There was no office or position like that."' Taṅka Prasād Āchārya (Fisher 1997: 188) refers to the late Rāṇā period as one of 'jaṅgalī rāj' (jungle rule), 'more backward than a feudal system'.

administrators capable of dealing with legal and financial affairs to some degree of sophistication. Thus, even as school textbooks remained unwritten or unavailable, the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti was busy producing many volumes on court procedure, accounting practices, etc. (with titles such as *Gorakhā-adālatī-śikṣā*, *Gorakhā-srestā-śikṣā* (Āchārya Dīkṣit 1922/23b, 1924/25), etc.<sup>198</sup> Some pedagogical resources were gradually developed: Rudrarāj Pāṇḍe and Vāsudev Bhaṭṭarāi taught Indian and British history in the Darbar High School in the 1930s and both had produced relevant textbooks by the end of this decade (Onta 1996c: 224). Nepal's history and geography were not taught.

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<sup>198</sup> Āchārya Dīkṣit was editor-in-chief of these titles *ex officio* as director of the GBPS. All of the volumes were printed at the Śrī Naksāl Press on very thin paper, presumably local and cheap. The *Gorakhā-adālatī-śikṣā* ran to four parts, originally published from 1922/24 in print runs of one thousand (with at least the first volume going to reprint in the same numbers in 1924/25; the preface of the reprint explained that the first run had sold out). Their legalistic language is of course heavily Farsi/Urdu influenced, and marked by the inroad of English words such as 'report'. Nevertheless they demonstrate that the Nepali syntax of this administrative linguistic register is capable of conveying the necessary legal subtleties and complexities. While not conforming exactly to modern orthography and grammar, their language seems fairly standard. The *Gorakhā-srestā-śikṣā* was produced in a near identical format (albeit with slightly higher print and paper quality) in three parts divided into two volumes (published in 1922/23, print run 1,000), the first of which was reprinted in a run of 1,500 within a year. Interestingly, these figures appear to indicate that by the 1920s there was a sizeable legal-bureaucratic middle class with basic education *within Nepal* itself (for as these books related specifically to Nepalese laws and practices they would have had little market among Nepalis in India, except perhaps those students who aimed to join government service).

Date	Form of recognition
1820	as language for study at Fort William College; J.A. Ayton's <i>A Grammar of the Nepalese Language</i> published
1911	as second language for Matriculation in United Provinces by University of Allahabad
1918	as vernacular for composition in Matriculation, Intermediate, and BA Examinations of Calcutta University
1926	as a 'principal vernacular' of Bengal by Indian Naturalization Act <sup>199</sup> Nepali books approved for use in all classes of primary schools and primary stages of Middle Vernacular Schools in Bengal
1935	as vernacular for teaching and examination in all primary schools in Darjeeling district with a majority of Nepali students
1939	as medium of instruction up to Middle School level in the district of Darjeeling
1949	as medium of instruction in all Primary, Middle and High schools in the predominantly Nepali speaking areas in the district of Darjeeling
1953	as medium for School Final (Matriculation) Examination under Calcutta University
1961	as official language, alongside Bengali, in the sub-divisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong according to the West Bengal Official Language Act
1973	as Indian national literary language by Sahitya Akademi
1992	as a national language of India by inclusion in Schedule Eight of the Constitution

Table 4-1 Some steps in the recognition of the Nepali language in India, 1820-1992.<sup>200</sup>

However, even before the prospect of Nepali being included in formal curriculums within India or a larger Nepalese educational system became a realistic goal, private sector publishers had engaged in the business of textbook production. When Nepali was approved as a vernacular for composition in Calcutta University examinations (see *Table 4-1*), Pārasmaṇi spoke in dramatic terms (C1(8-9): 41): 'Dear readers! You have become joyful hearing this joyous news; but alongside it is another problem ... our language has gained a place in Calcutta University but where are the Nepali books for the course of study? ... we must now start to write these or later we will have to suffer great shame.' In his later

<sup>199</sup> Rāi (1992) offers a brief explanation of Nepali's significance under this Act.

<sup>200</sup> Developments within Nepal also affected Nepali's level of official recognition, for example the renaming of GBPS to NBPS.

response to Calcutta University's action, Sūryavikram's final words (1919a: 20) echo those of Pārasmaṇi:

Now I will ask one question of the Nepali *jāti* and conclude this letter. We made a movement; our language was recognised; now what answer may we give when Calcutta University demands books suitable for teaching? Shall we put forward *Śrīgārdarpaṇ*? ... it is absolutely essential that we now immediately create 15 or 20 textbooks. We must devote our full attention to this subject from now on or we will suffer disappointment later.<sup>201</sup>

Much as these appeals were directed to a wider public, the tasks outlined were largely taken on by Pārasmaṇi himself, often single-handed, in the years to come. Yet the implication that until 1918 no Nepali textbooks existed at all is unfounded. A major campaigner for the recognition of Nepali in the United Provinces was Rāmamaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit; when Allahabad sanctioned its use in examinations, books from the Prābhākari Press which he managed were approved as textbooks. Furthermore a study of early Banaras-produced textbooks indicates that there was a flourishing educational print market from even before the turn of the century: Pārasmaṇi and Sūryavikram's plea was more for a pedagogical paradigm shift than for the introduction of a type of writing entirely alien to Nepali. In 1908, Kul Bahādur Guruṇ's *Nepālī pahilā pustak* ('First Nepali Book') saw a first edition published by the author himself—who was stationed in Quetta, presumably in military service—and printed in 1,000 copies in Banaras; a few months later a new edition of publisher Puṇyaprasād's *Gorkhā bhāṣāko varṇamālā* (an alphabet) ran to 2,000 copies; 1909 saw an attempt by Viśvarāj and Harihar Śarmā either to ride on the success of Guruṇ's book or to eliminate it from competition as their own *Nepālī pahilī* (sic) *pustak* was launched with a run of no less than 5,000 (and an enlarged edition in 1912 had a run of 10,000, unprecedented for any Nepali publication); by 1910 Dravid's mathematics primer *Gaṇit chandrikā* (whose third edition had been published in 1902), was also producing print runs of 2,000, it too published by Viśvarāj Harihar.<sup>202</sup> While far from a

<sup>201</sup> An interesting late twentieth century counterpoint to Pārasmaṇi and Sūryavikram's questions of who will write textbooks. following Nepali's recognition by Calcutta University can be found in Rāi's similar rhetorical questioning (1993: 17) following Nepali's inclusion in the Eighth Schedule: 'starting to write this essay a question comes to mind: we had to do the work for language recognition, is it now we again who have to write? There were plenty of poets, writers, critics, intellectuals and educated people who just looked on. Might they now write? Or will they now always remain mere onlookers?'

<sup>202</sup> This was still being advertised (in two parts) in 1928 for four annas.

comprehensive account, these glimpses demonstrate that there was a significant market for basic primers; these were gradually supplemented with more sophisticated textbooks and an increasing number of English-learning aids. It should be noted that none of these books were yet officially approved by educational authorities: they would have served a market of private schools, *pāṭhśālās*, home tutoring, and self-teaching. The presence in this market of the major Nepali publishers (joined, for example, by the Krishna Madho Company, whose own language primer dates from at least 1915) indicates that there were profits to be made. In the years before the First World War thousands of Nepalis were reading and learning to read.

Apart from the involvement of commercial publishers—whose enthusiasm to enter a sizeable and profitable market is unsurprising—the production of educational materials had enticed authors well known in other fields. Alongside catechisms and other religious materials, the Darjeeling Christian priest Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān had, with his long-standing collaborator Miss Goalen, published a translated history of India (1910).<sup>203</sup> The talented young writer Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā had also published a *History of India* in 1914.<sup>204</sup> Similarly, the versatile Śikharnāth Suvedī turned his hand to basic education in various works: a *Pahilā kitāb*, *Varṇamālā*, *Śiśubodh* and *Bālbodh*. The lengthy preface to his *Akṣarmālā* ('garland of letters') reveals a sophisticated and cosmopolitan approach which combines scientific validation with typical self-promotion. Suvedī's appeal to 'respected gentlemen' explains that his aim is 'that our Gorkhali children, boys and girls, may well and quickly recognise the fifty characters': to achieve this goal he has not only made a survey of all similar primers available in Nepali, Hindi, and Marathi but has added to this his 'own new imagination (*āphule nañā kalpanā garī*)' (1913: 2). Works such as this indicate clearly the overlaps between generic popular publishing approaches and the emergent professional pedagogical styles endorsed by government education departments

<sup>203</sup> This was the *Hindustānko itihāsko postak*. I have only been able to see this book briefly in a private collection: it is a sizeable work and, although its language is marked by the idiosyncratic orthography and style for which others would criticise Gaṅgāprasād, it is lucid and readily intelligible.

<sup>204</sup> *Bhāratvarṣko itihās*: this is according to inside back cover of *Jīvancharitra* (1916) and other accounts such as Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 220-21): it was probably a translation of Rameśchandra Datta's work.

and school inspectors. Thus the *Akṣarmālā* follows a well-trodden path in offering a compendium of attractive information ('*rasilā rasilā* definitions of each character') while at the same time paying detailed attention to the teaching method recommended for the *paṇḍit*. This advice is based on small group or individual tuition and is followed by lengthy explanations (*ibid.*: 4-8) of how each letter gained its name and how to explain this to children. The content of the textbook itself is similar to others of the period, part manual and part reference work: twenty-one pages devoted to the Nepali alphabet and combinations of characters; eleven pages of lessons consisting of reading passages introducing increasingly complicated words; a two page explanation of the *vargas* or phonetic classes of consonants; a lesson of three pages (as promised in the preface) devoted to names of parts of the body, and a final two pages on children's speech,<sup>205</sup> a selection of other languages' alphabets (Bengali, Urdu, English, Gujarati) and a table illustrating how to count from one to ten in ten languages.<sup>206</sup>

Other authors of successful popular works were also drawn into the educational world, their efforts increasingly acknowledging the pressures of formal educational requirements. Rāmprasād Satyāl, some of whose works from the 1920s were examined in 2.3, acknowledged in his *English Grammar in the Nepali Language* (1915/16) that even as it was struggling to establish itself vis-à-vis other Indian languages, Nepali was also forced to compete against the established appeal and status of English. Satyāl—who also thanks Dharaṇīdhar for his help—explains his motivations in a preface:

Gentlemen! Seeing that our Nepali students studying in schools and other gentlemen of the general Nepali public (*sarvasādhāraṇa nepālī mahānubhāvharū*) are having to make a great effort to learn the foreign English language because until now no English language grammar has been made in our Nepali language, this book has been written to alleviate their effort. Nowadays is there anyone who does not want to know English? Who does not have some need to use the English language? As well as students studying in *pāṭhśālās*, the English language is a topic of conversation in everyone's houses. As this book is in Nepali, our country brothers may learn all the rules of conversational and written English grammar conveniently and without great effort and will very quickly become skilled in the English language. This book is written on the basis of very large English grammars. It is the best friend of our students studying English and others who seek to learn English.

<sup>205</sup> Nepali has a distinct register of vocabulary for common items used exclusively when talking to small children. This list (Suvedī 1913: 45-46) includes examples such as *bubū* ('milk') and *āchī* ('poo').

<sup>206</sup> Interestingly, Hindi is named simply as 'pakkī' ('complete' or 'definite') (Suvedī 1913: 55).

Educational aids were thus commercialised as well as being promoted by writers and publishers who were already established in print. The development of such publications indicates a growing sophistication within their market. Thus when Dravid's English-Nepali dictionary (1920) advertises his *English Grammar*, it attempts immediately to establish academic credentials by emphasising that it is based on the opinions of 'many famous western grammarians'.<sup>207</sup> Not cheap at two rupees, the price is justified by its usefulness to 'students young and old ... from those studying in schools and colleges to "private" or home-educated students'. The prolific Dravid (whose English guides for Nepali students date from at least 1911: see 2.4) had also produced a *Gorkha Pronouncing Dictionary* at Rs 2½, while the first and second parts of his English-Gorkha primer sold for only four annas each; these were all available from Viśvarāj Harihar's ever-successful Gorkhā Pustakālay.<sup>208</sup> One may conclude that Pārasmaṇi and Sūryavikram's dramatic claims on the lack of Nepali textbooks must be taken with a pinch of salt: the Banaras Nepali publishing business had been catering to the needs of tens of thousands of students over decades.

#### 4.2.2. Darjeeling, Pārasmaṇi and the new model

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to ignore or underestimate the role of Pārasmaṇi in transforming the production of textbooks and in leaving his imprint on Nepali schoolbooks to this day. By 1940 he had produced no less than thirty original textbooks (a few in collaboration with other writers) and fifteen translations or adaptations (Pradhān 1991: 360-61; 363-63). And their style was radically different from some of their predecessors. At its simplest, Banaras represented a lengthy Brahmanical tradition (illustrated by works such as the *Aṅkendukeśar* (advertised in Viśvarāj Śarmā 1928), 'a treasury of arithmetic ... with the all forms of calculation such as the *trairāsik*,

<sup>207</sup> Although he wrote several books for Nepalis, information on Dravid is lacking (cf. Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1993/94: 222-23)).

<sup>208</sup> Basic study aids remained a mainstay of Viśvarāj Harihar's catalogue through the 1920s. Harihar's illustrated Nepali alphabets (e.g. 4<sup>th</sup> edition 1926, reissued under Viśvarāj's name in 1928) follow the accepted pattern seen in Śikharnāth's *Akṣarmālā*, combining decent quality paper and printing with nice engraved illustrations; and supplemented by a typical compendium of useful information: weights and measures, fractions and times tables, Bengali, Urdu and English alphabets, names of months and *tithis*, how to write letters, *sarasvatī stotras*, etc., filling 72 large pages.

*pañcharāsik*, etc. given with examples in Nepali *ślokas*') whereas the Darjeeling area was aiming to give Nepali official status by producing English-styled curriculum materials endorsed by publishers such as Macmillan and Longmans. Of course, the educational field was ripe for the implementation of the kind of social *unnati* project that Pārasmaṇi had promoted through his journal. *Chandrikā* had seen many contributions on the subject of learning and schooling, which combined to support Pārasmaṇi's subsequent drive for textbook-writing. Inspiration was drawn from developments in other parts of India, such as the provision of free education and accommodation for poor students by an English high school in Mānbhūmi-Jhariyā (C1(2): 22). Other contributions raised the profile of teachers; for example, the unsigned essay 'Gārhashtya Jīvan' dwelled at great length on the importance of learning good habits from birth at home, as one's initial education would determine the course of one's later life. Thus (C1(8-9): 10), 'great politicians and leaders also work according to the education they have received at home, and for this reason it is fitting that those who give education to boys at home should be even better than those who run the state.'<sup>209</sup>

Moreover, for Pārasmaṇi and the readership of *Chandrikā*, promotion of Nepali education was directly linked to a struggle for cultural recognition and community representation. The changing market for language primers reflected a transformation in the significance of language and its teaching: the Banaras market had catered largely to the private (private individuals, private tuition, private publishers catering to a core readership of students for whom the symbolism of the Nepali language was historically constituted privately and within the family) whereas Pārasmaṇi's drive was for the institution of the

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<sup>209</sup> The situation in Nepal was not ignored: a student's essay in *Chandrikā* (Upreti 1919) claimed tendentiously that the main reason for the lack of education in Nepal was that everyone was too busy repelling Muslim invaders to worry about learning. The *pax Britannica* and peace within Nepal have allowed education to develop apace: he speaks glowingly (108) of the Darbar High School for study up to matriculation ('nowadays the sons of all in the kingdom, great or small, can study there without fees'), the Sanskrit *pāṭhśālā* and Farsi *madrāsā*. The fact that annually only 15-20 students pass matriculation (all of them boys) does not stand in the way of lavish praise for the Nepal government (109): 'For us Nepalis there is something of even more joy and good fortune ... that now in Nepal a college has also opened. With the opening of this college even the sons of poor people, living off whatever they have at home such as *ḍhuṭo* flour, are able to receive higher education. And in the term of office of the current Mahārāj [Chandra Śamsēr] many works have taken place and are going on for the *unnati* of the country, the spread of learning and the convenience of citizens (*raitīko suvistā*).'

Nepali language in the public realm (public recognition through university and government, public tuition in state schools, public promotion through cultural organisations). This is not to say that such public approaches to formal recognition were alien to the activities hitherto concentrated in Banaras. Indeed, the campaign to have Nepali authorised as a vernacular for use in matriculation examinations in Calcutta University was successful not least because it mobilised support from the three pillars of the Nepali public sphere: Kathmandu, Banaras and Darjeeling.<sup>210</sup> Nevertheless, for the experiment of incorporating Nepali in the official curriculum the laboratory was Darjeeling, and it was here that the challenges of delivering Nepali's public status became apparent. Six months after Calcutta University's decision, a celebratory editorial by Pārasmaṇi turned sour as he underlined the problems of its implementation and launched a bitter attack on the principal of the government school (C2(2): 52-53):

At last the [Nepali] language was approved and everyone was overjoyed. In particular, there were no bounds to the delight of school students. But alas! Seeing that the authorities have still not made arrangements for teaching the Nepali language to students of Darjeeling High School one is deeply disappointed. From this it shines out clearly that the headmaster Śrīyukta Achyut Nāth Adhikārī has no love for the Nepali language or for Nepali students. If this were not the case then would he not have made arrangements for teaching the language in his own school as soon as it had been approved by Calcutta University?

The excuse offered was that there were no books, teachers or rooms for Nepali classes. However, Pārasmaṇi argued that while these might not all be immediately available they could be developed and provided given will and effort. Noting that there were no problems with facilities for Bengalis or Biharis, his bluntly direct appeal to the head of the High School left no doubt as to where he laid the blame for lack of progress (C2(2): 54):

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<sup>210</sup> The editorial which reported the university's approval of Nepali appeared under the headline 'Harṣa Samāchār' ('Joyous News', C1(8-9): 41). It thanks those who contributed to the campaign, chiefly the students of Darjeeling High School, the headmaster of Darbar High School (Sharada Prasad Mukherji BA BL), the school and college students of Calcutta and *Gorkhālī* weekly published from Kashi. When Sūryavikram weighs in with his response to the happy news a few months later (he reports that he heard the news from *Baṅgabāsī*, a Hindi weekly published from Calcutta) he takes a similar line of congratulating those involved in the campaign and reminding society that the new situation raises new questions. He chooses to highlight (1919a: 19) the role played by the talented young writer Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā ('Vijñānvilās') whose name had been omitted by Pārasmaṇi in his roll of honour. There is also no doubt some self-interest in the prominence Sūryavikram gives to the role played by *Gorkhālī*, of which he was the publisher and an editor. (The extent of Sūryavikram's involvement in editorial work is much disputed (cf. Hīrā Chhetrī 1993: 44). Meanwhile, Pārasmaṇi's son Nagendramaṇi (1991: 73-77) manages to describe the campaign with almost no mention of *Gorkhālī*.)

Darjeeling High School was established for the welfare of Nepali (Pārvatīya) students but for those same simple Nepali students the school has no room!! Whatever the case, Gurūjī, if you have within you the pride that as their head teacher you really love Nepali students and want their welfare then immediately start to promote the Nepali language in school by whatever means (*jasari hunchha prachār garī dinu hos*). Through this you will gain name and glory for welfare, otherwise not.

This plea was successful and shortly afterwards Dharaṇīdhar was appointed to teach Nepali in the Government High School. Meanwhile the month in which Pārasmaṇi's editorial appeared, February 1919, turned out to be his last as manager of the Hari Printing Press. While it took some more months to hand over the editorship of *Chandrikā* to Raśmī Prasād Āle, Pārasmaṇi quickly resigned from his other duties when he was appointed as the first teacher of Nepali to Matriculation level in the Scottish Universities Mission Institute at Kalimpong. The situation for promoting Nepali as an educational medium in the area became rapidly more favourable, and the early 1920s were crucially productive years. Pārasmaṇi himself impressed the Education Department with his ability and commitment and two years later was promoted to the comparatively influential post of Sub-Inspector of Schools for the Darjeeling Hill Region, the first Nepali to occupy such a position. Meanwhile, in 1923, Sūryavikram also joined the Nepali teaching staff of the Darjeeling High School, thus bringing together the SūDhaPā threesome that was to be a driving force behind many important developments such as the founding of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan in 1924 (4.3.2). By 1926, further steps towards the consolidation of Nepali's official status were achieved with the recognition of the language as a 'principal vernacular' of Bengal by the Indian Naturalization Act, and the approval of Nepali books for use in all classes of primary schools and primary stages of Middle Vernacular Schools in Bengal.

The endorsement of Nepali textbooks was of signal importance in providing the basis for propagation of an increasingly standardised language and associated culture and literature. It was also the result of a diplomatic coup by Pārasmaṇi, when he persuaded the influential publishers Macmillan to take up their publication.<sup>211</sup> He—along with many

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<sup>211</sup> In fact, Pārasmaṇi had already had one primer (the *Nepālī pahilo kitāb*) accepted by Longmans in 1921 but this was targeted specifically at use in mission schools: the Eastern Himalayan Mission's Literature Committee had supported the production of a Nepali primer by a Miss Henderson but, disappointed at the quality of its language, Pārasmaṇi had felt compelled to submit his own version. As a condition of approval by the Mission he had to include some Bible stories which led to criticism that he was pandering to Christians (Pradhan 1997: 22-23). Introducing the second edition (Pradhān 1927), Pārasmaṇi makes it clear that the 'character of Jesus, etc., written by Miss B. Gardner' (other

subsequent writers—has recounted (Pradhān 1969: 1-7) the tale of the publisher's representatives visit to Darjeeling. Deputed to act as their guide, Pārasmaṇi decided to impress them with the majestic views of the Tista river on the road to Gangtok: the representatives were indeed so moved by the experience of the twisting hill road that Macmillan's manager, Mr Parkhurst, was sick. Pārasmaṇi moved with alacrity to offer his own pullover for the distinguished guest to vomit on. For this somewhat humiliating display of quick thinking he had a good ulterior motive: from the Macmillan representative's gratitude Pārasmaṇi extracted the promise that he would recommend to his head office that Macmillan publish Nepali schoolbooks.<sup>212</sup> The story is recounted with good humour but the significance of this small incident was far-reaching: the good reputation and financial clout of a major publishing house gave a great boost to the campaign for producing curriculum materials that would gain official acceptance. The introduction of these books was not without problems—Pārasmaṇi incurred the wrath of his superiors by jumping the gun and introducing them without formal approval, and non-Nepali communities were not enthusiastic about the language's new-found status—but they rapidly gained currency and fulfilled Macmillan's hopes of profitability.

A brief consideration of these textbooks' form and content indicates their distance from most earlier efforts. Pārasmaṇi's first guide to Nepali literature (1924), aimed at second grade students, illustrates the use to which Macmillan's backing was put.<sup>213</sup> Despite the high quality Calcutta printing and a liberal sprinkling of good engravings the price was restricted to an affordable two annas. Its preface (i-ii) contains useful practical advice for teachers on how best to use the book in the classroom. Pārasmaṇi's experience as a teacher

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brief lessons included the Garden of Eden and the creation story) were included at the behest of the Mission Council. The concluding prayer to an unnamed 'īśvar' (1927: 32) is surely the work of Pārasmaṇi himself as it ends on the distinctly Hindu trope of 'we fall at your lotus feet'.

<sup>212</sup> As he later put it (Pradhan 1997: 27): 'It is said that Guru Gorakhnath by vomiting gave the great king Prithvīnarayan Shah the boon of the Kingdom of Nepal. The manager of the Macmillan Company, Mr Parkhurst, too, vomited and gave the Nepali community in the district of Darjeeling the boon of textbooks. Both these boons should be written in letters of gold when writing the history of the Nepalese people.' Pradhan (1997: 24-28) gives further details on the introduction of the Macmillan textbooks.

<sup>213</sup> This *Nepālī sāhitya* series was later introduced from the first grade, and the revised second grade reader contained the heroic tale of VC winner Gaje Ghale (Pārasmaṇi and Rudramaṇi Pradhān 1949: 38-43) which is discussed by Onta (1996c: 287-91).

and inspector enables him to offer guidance quite different to Śikharnāth's notes for *paṇḍitjīs* working in private tuition. Here instructors are offered tips on how to use the blackboard, to manage large classes by having one student to stand at the front and read out then asking the others to make corrections, to go round children making sure they each have a turn. In short, the directions conform to his advice elsewhere (1927, preface) that 'it is best that *gurūs* should follow current scientific methods', with the clear implication that traditional pedagogical techniques should be abandoned. The lessons themselves are unremarkable,<sup>214</sup> but textbooks such as this also formed a platform for the propagation of the rhetoric of social progress to a much wider audience. For example, this reader (1924: 20) features a poem entitled 'Vidyā' which presents to young readers an encapsulation of the many benefits of learning as they had been elaborated in journal discourse (3.2.1).

Control over some of the materials entering the school curriculum—through writing and editing approved textbooks—thus provided the means to disseminate the key features of a discourse that had previously been confined to a relatively limited circle of journal readers and writers. Meanwhile, the ability to dictate the orthography and grammatical standards adopted by schoolchildren would prove a decisive factor in Pārasmaṇi's style of Nepali eclipsing other competing varieties. Meanwhile, the influence of his first series of textbooks spread through other routes. Where the Gurkha Rifles had previously adapted the traditional *Vīrsikkā* tale, staple of Banaras publishers, for use as teaching material (2.3.4), they now translated Pārasmaṇi's 'scientific' Nepali readers (for example, Pradhan and Pradhan n.d., prepared for use in the 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles and printed by the Army Press at their Abbottabad headquarters). And while Pārasmaṇi's books were not adopted by the Nepal government they were nonetheless influential in shaping the development of Nepalese textbooks. The first full set of graded primary readers (from class one to seven) produced within Nepal was the *Sahāyak praveśikā* series of the 1940s.<sup>215</sup> Published by the

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<sup>214</sup> This reader includes a typical selection: plenty of animal stories (the cow, the greedy dog, fox and crow), natural topics (corn, tea), historical tales (George Washington and the cherry tree, emperor George V, Aśoka), moral tales (on naughty boy Kālu, mercy, and lastly 20 pieces of moral advice under title *Upadeś*).

<sup>215</sup> These appear to have been published in 1946/47 but a note inside the frontispiece of the fifth reader states that its first edition was in 1943/44, perhaps implying that rapid turnover of the first

NBPS and written in Kathmandu, they were initially printed in Banaras, their cheap type and colourful North Indian cover illustrations representing the lowest common denominator of production values. Having used a remarkable variety of Banaras printers, presumably in a search for value and reliability, the publication of second editions was entrusted to Macmillan and printing switched to Calcutta.<sup>216</sup> Under the direction of Nepal's Director of Public Instruction, Major General Mṛgendra Śamsēr, new writers were employed (Badrīnāth Bhaṭṭarāi and Śyāmdās Vaiṣṇav) and new topics were included. While part of this process was a 'Nepalisation' of content (various Nepal-specific topics such as a description of Bhaktapur's Biskeṭ festival were added), more obvious is the 'Macmillanisation', itself informed by Pārasmaṇi's approach. The balance of subject matter in the new Nepalese editions closely reflected that developed by Pārasmaṇi (hence a liberal sprinkling of generically Indian tales, from the story of Vālmīki to Akbar-Birbal episodes) while the layout, illustrations and print were also brought into line with this precedent. Even the inclusion of Nepalese topics was not new: for example, the portrait of Jaṅg Bahādur's character in *Sahāyak praveśikā* 3 (30-32), while more hagiographic, reflects a similar lesson in Pārasmaṇi and Rudramaṇi's *Nepālī sāhitya* 2 (70-75).<sup>217</sup> Thus the goals of social improvement that had been developed in the public discourse examined in Chapter 3 were transmitted through teaching materials to an ever-expanding captive audience of young students.

Meanwhile, the progress of Nepali education remained a vital topic of discussion and activity in the public realm within India as further degrees of recognition and implementation were sought. Following the production of a full range of basic textbooks,

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edition had led to a reprint. The writers were Paṇḍit Śyāmkṛṣṇa Gautam BA and Paṇḍit kalādhar Śarmā. The GBPS had, however, been active in textbook production over more than two decades: the back cover of Āchārya Dīkṣit 1922/23a lists its textbooks published and approved by the board (15), in press (4) and awaiting approval (7); all available from the Samiti office.

<sup>216</sup> Each of the first edition parts I have seen was printed in a different location: the Yajñeśar Press (part 2), Hitachintak Press (part 3), Khages Press (part 4), and Jñānmaṇḍal Press (part 5). Of these, the Hitachintak Press had a lengthy record of producing Nepali books for publishers such as Viśvarāj Harihar.

<sup>217</sup> A detailed comparison of these early textbooks remains to be done, and would be a valuable undertaking. It may briefly be noted that the Macmillan books prepared for the Indian curriculum were in general more advanced than their grade counterparts for Nepal, and included more advanced teaching aids, such as notes on vocabulary and structured questions on passages.

the goal of introducing Nepali as a teaching medium—rather than just as one of the vernaculars approved for study—was achieved in Bengal in 1935.<sup>218</sup> In this year Hariprasād Pradhān, one of the founders of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, took the opportunity of his speech as Chair of its annual general meeting to review the progress made by Nepali in the education system. The NSS had completed its first ten years and Pradhān, having left Darjeeling five years before, was well placed to make a balanced assessment of developments. He started by recalling that not long ago, when he was a student, for want of Nepali textbooks schoolchildren had no choice but to start their studies in Hindi and then some years later transfer to English, meaning that none could pass their matriculation examinations before the age of eighteen to twenty. It was only after an ‘awakening (*jāgrti*)’ among Nepalis that some educated people started to write and print books suitable for primary education (1935: 67).

Pradhān reviews the situation of Nepali in the Darjeeling district and the gradual success of the movement for its recognition, noting (*ibid.*: 70) that it took fifteen years for the Bengal Government’s civil servants to understand and deal with the simple problem of implementing Nepali as a teaching language. Mindful of opposition from some non-Nepali communities (4.3.3), he argues persuasively that the idea that Nepali-speaking children should be allowed to study in the medium of their own mother tongue should not be unsatisfactory to anyone (*ibid.*: 70-71): ‘even though we Nepalis are the largest [group] in this district we have never said that students of other *jātis* must study in Nepali’. He understands that the use of Hindi used to be a necessity but ‘the difference between circumstances then and current circumstances in the district is like that between heaven and hell’ and if the government now tries to force Nepalis to study in Hindi they meet fierce opposition from the Nepali people (*ibid.*: 71). Pradhān also offers some interesting insights

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<sup>218</sup> *Nebulā* (1(1): 11-12) announced Nepali’s approval for primary education and reproduced in full the official confirmation from O.M. Martin, Secretary to the Government of Bengal on 4 January 1935. The government’s decision was to recognise Nepali as one of the vernaculars for teaching and examination to all lower and upper primary schools in Darjeeling District. However, conditions were attached: the majority of the pupils in the schools concerned must be ‘Nepalese’, ‘non-Nepalese should not be compelled to learn Nepali’, and primary examinations were to be conducted both in Nepali and Hindi. One further disappointment was that discussion of adopting Nepali as the medium of instruction in middle schools was to be deferred for three years. In a reprise of *Chandrikā*’s role in 1918, *Nebulā* thanks those who played an important part in the campaign for Nepali recognition.

on the progress of Nepali education in different regions: among all the areas in Bengal and Assam, Darjeeling examinees seem to have worked most on literature, and this is because it offers the best arrangements for teaching Nepali. While Shillong also has provision for teaching Nepali literature he bemoans the fact that Calcutta—‘second city of the British empire, home to university and knowledge’—has no provisions for the promotion of Nepali literature or teaching of the language (*ibid.*: 72). Thus students who give their Nepali exams from the Calcutta centre seem to have never had exercises in literature: the university could surely make arrangements for the teaching of the Nepali language and for appointing a professor for literature. Nevertheless, Nepali has now gained a place in education and it is only the top two classes of schools that cannot offer full Nepali language education; with production of sufficient appropriate books and petitioning that will surely be corrected (*ibid.*: *ibid.*: 74).

His message is thus one of both achievement and the need for further efforts. Yet the terms in which he envisages Nepali’s assumption of higher status are more ambitious than his predecessors could have hoped for (*ibid.*: 72): ‘Now the Nepali people must quickly mount a fierce campaign to register the Nepali language as a “major” language among the various languages of India’. And the campaign should not stop there, for ‘all educated men and women’ should press on and ‘make the Nepali language worthy of comparison with the great languages of the world’ (*ibid.*: 73). With the completion of more modest goals, the target can be raised. And indeed by the turn of the next decade, with the consolidation of Nepali education its supporters were looking not to its establishment or survival but to an increasing refinement of pedagogical technique. By this stage, increasingly typically for Darjeeling, the District Inspector of Schools was a well-qualified Nepali of non-ancestral-Nepali-speaking origin, Kṛṣṇa Bahādur Guruṅ BSc, BT, BES. When it fell to him to introduce a translated manual on teaching methodology (1942)<sup>219</sup> he effortlessly reproduced the rhetoric of learning that had been developed over the preceding decades:

What is ‘education’? To whom must it be given? When must it be given? And how must it be given? The *unnati* of each *jāti* depends on the answers to the questions asked above and their practical use. The *jāti* which understands the meaning of education and has real knowledge of to whom, why, by whom, when and how education should be given will be

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<sup>219</sup> The unnamed translator was in fact Pārasmaṇi (Pradhan 1997: 43).

counted among the world's developed (*unnat*) *jātis*. But how far behind are we in relation to education? Thinking of the answer to this we are forced to say 'Alas!' (*dhikkār ho*) ... until hundreds and hundreds of new books in our language about modern teaching methods are written we will indeed remain behind in the right (*hak*) to education.

The rhetoric retained the same tropes but the context had been transformed. For contributors to *Chandra* and *Chandrikā* more than two decades before, the situation of Nepali and its speakers had seemed hopeless and prospects of catching up with the progress effected by Bengali and Hindi-speakers bleak. Their acute awareness of Nepali backwardness had been exacerbated by a sense of powerlessness, their cries for *jāti* advancement resounding within their own print community but not reaching the ears of authorities in either India or Nepal. Yet by the start of the 1940s, calls for further progress were being backed by solid institutional achievements: while Guruṅ's phraseology is inherited, the fact that he is able to deploy it from a position of authority within the educational establishment reflects the strides that Nepali had made. Within one generation, Nepali had been standardised, recognised as an educational medium, and the process of propagation to new generations of students had taken shape.

#### 4.3. Institutions: from cultural expression to political consciousness

यो संस्था हाम्रो अस्वस्थ समाजका निमित्त औषधालय  
हो ।

*This institution is a medicine store for our  
sick society.*

Dharaṅīdhar's speech at the opening of the Gorkha Library, Kurseong (C2(2): 61)

In an essay read out at the weekly meeting of Darjeeling's Gorkha Samiti on 20 September 1922, Dharaṅīdhar claimed that for any work to be done one needs a combination of *hoś* and *joś*, known in *vedānta* as *jñān* and *ichchhā* (knowledge/awareness and desire/enthusiasm): 'work is the outcome of this *hoś* and *joś*; in *vedānta* it is called *yoga*'. Such philosophical ruminations on work and progress had a concrete purpose (Koirālā 1923: 3):

Since the creation of the world until today many *jātis* have arisen and many have been destroyed (*nāsiye*). Destroyed by what? Only by ignorance (*ajñān*). For that reason if we are to prevent rust from appearing on our *jāti* then we must make an effort to destroy ignorance. And how to do that? By work ... Now if we do not devote body, mind and wealth to lighting the lamp of knowledge, we Nepalis will be destroyed ... one sees and hears that Gorkhals from place to place are opening associations (*sabhā*), committees and libraries. Among such institutions some are only flickering with life, and seem about to be extinguished.

This is one of the clearest demonstrations of the bridge that was made between thought and action, of how Chapter 3's writers envisioned the link between rhetoric and practice. Dharaṇīdhar offered his listeners a manifesto which explicitly recognised that intellectual exercises producing *hoś* would only produce fruit when coupled with a *joś* that found expression in institution-building. For him, as for many of his leading contemporaries, the urge to build associations was thus an inescapable consequence of their discursive priorities.

Of course, even as Dharaṇīdhar was addressing the Gorkhā Samiti, the other 'lights of knowledge' of which he speaks were flickering in many locations. Library projects—such as those of Banaras and Kurseong described in detail below—provided one obvious link between the world of print and of community association. Social welfare organisations had also been founded, such as the Nepālī Asamartha Sahāyak Samiti of Calcutta with which Lakṣmīkānta Ārjyāl (1918) was associated. While similar developments were slowly coming to Nepal, as evidenced by the establishment of the GBPS or the later charitable Charkhā Saṁsthān (sponsored by Chandra Śamśer; see Shaha 1990: II, 168-69), institutions created by Nepalis in India were pioneering in their voluntarism and their conscious self-justification. Although local government patronage might be sought in India (4.3.3), relative freedom of action also enabled and demanded greater self-questioning: within Nepal, government support or diktat was sufficient basis for an institution whereas within India, even the process of establishment was mediated by an entirely novel form of public debate. This is exemplified by the discussion that took place at the meeting called to propose creating Darjeeling's Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan (discussed below), in which speakers directly addressed issues of the composition of the Nepali *jāti*, a question that was simply not the subject of public consideration inside Nepal.

As hinted at in Chapter 3's discussion of *vidyā* and *unnati*, contributors to early Nepali journals were not simply writing but were frequently involved in other projects. For them, the potential of journals was not confined to literary progress but also encompassed publicity and awareness-raising campaigns. Thus their pages could be used to appeal for funds for a building project or to report on the successful conclusion of public cultural functions, to announce committee meetings and invite participation or to record donations.

Allied to the written word was the development of drama, a medium which serves both as a vehicle for literary aspirations and as a platform from which to address the public and urge social reforms. Many associations shared similar or overlapping aims even if they were apparently working in different sectors: for example, the social messages of Darjeeling plays could be echoed in the political manifestos of the All India Gorkha League's newspapers from Dehradun. The following sections examine the process of social institutionalisation which enabled the abstract ideals expressed in print discourse to be embodied in concrete programmes and organisations. Many associations were premised on literary-cultural aims: 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 employ case studies to examine their creation and functioning, and their moulding and exploitation of public space. Despite its own attempt to separate political concerns for the sake of analytical convenience, 4.3.3 argues that Nepali political consciousness and subsequent mobilisation grew from the ground prepared by pioneering literary-cultural groups, however much they professed to be divorced from the political realm.

#### 4.3.1. Drama: extension of medium and audience

नेपालका पार्वत्य जनगोष्ठीहरू सामाजिक राजनीतिक साझा अनुभवले एक सविशेष मनोभावात्मक एकत्व बनेका थिए र दार्जीलिङमा अन्य जातिका विपर्ययमा सामूहिक आफूलाई गोर्खा जाति चिन्छन्। गोर्खा जातीय भावनाले गोर्खा जातीय रंगमंच खोज्दछ, बनाउँदछ।

*Through common social and political experiences Nepal's hill communities had built a particular emotional unity, and in distinction to other jātis in Darjeeling they recognised themselves collectively as the Gorkha jāti. The Gorkha jāti feeling is searching for, is building, a Gorkha jāti theatre.*

Rāi (1984: 39)

Darjeeling pioneered the application of one important means of linking journal rhetoric to a wider audience: drama. Nepal's foremost playwright Bālkr̥ṣṇa Sama (cited in Onta 1996c: 238-39) neatly encapsulated the didactic potential of the stage: 'Education should be mandatory in our country. The country cannot move ahead unless [its people] are educated or literate. The most easy means of education is through stage performances of *nāṭaks*. This way education is made tasteful.'<sup>220</sup> Of course, the Nepali language had already found

<sup>220</sup> Sama had a political as well as educational purpose (cf. comments on his *Mukunda indirā* in 2.3.1): 'If our country does not have its own *nāṭaks*, the people will be engulfed by the entertainment provided by foreign *nāṭaks*. Then even if we are politically independent, we will be culturally dependent.' Pr̥thvinārāyaṇ Śāh in his *Divya upadeś* (Stiller 1968: 46) had similarly warned against

expression in different popular media, from hereditary lineages of *gāine* singers to a variety of folk drama forms (Bandhu 2001/02b: 266-82). Darjeeling's dramatists, however, envisaged a new role for theatre in society. When, in 1921, Harisiṃh Thāpā, Hastalāl Girī and others organised the first Nepali Sarasvatī *pūjā* in Darjeeling, they were only extending further into the public realm a tradition of dramatic display which dated back more than a decade. In 1909 the ambitiously named Gorkha National Theatrical Company, the first Nepali theatre group, staged Pahalmānsiṃh Svāmṛ's play *Aṭalbahādur* (Rāi 1984: 34).<sup>221</sup> The same year saw the founding of the Children Amusement Association (CAA), which then incorporated the earlier company. The playwright was from Nepal—and this work is considered one of the first modern Nepali plays—and the setting was the Hindu Public Hall, constructed in 1906, destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1908.<sup>222</sup> Subsequent plays (such as *Kaṃjūsko dhan*, 1910) were often adaptations from Hindi or Bengali: Śarmā (1995/96a: 35) comments that notable progress in Darjeeling Nepali dramas coincided in particular with the development of Bengali drama. As Pradhān (1982: 100-01) observes, this was—as far as other Indians were concerned—the era of Bengali *jāṭiyatā*, with the partition of Bengal seen in Darjeeling as an attempt by Curzon to crush a blossoming national sentiment. The inspiration for leaders of the would-be Nepali *jāṭi* was direct and compelling even if Bengali plays were not performed locally ('it doesn't seem that Girīś

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the dangers of foreign theatrical entertainments: 'Muglan is near. In that place there are singers and dancers. In rooms lined with paintings they forget themselves in melodies woven on the drum and sitar. There is great pleasure in these melodies. But it drains you wealth. They take away the secrets of your country and deceive the poor... let no one open the mountain trails for these classes of people.' Indeed, it was later exactly this—distinctly middlebrow—style of amusement which engrossed the Rāṇās (Onta 1997: 76). As the fashion for Hindi/Urdu waned, Nepali dramas started to be written, the first being *Vīr dhruva charitra nāṭak* (1916) by Kedār Śamśer Thāpā, composed for the Prime Minister's theatre in Singha Darbar (Adhikārī 1977: 34).

<sup>221</sup> This was the first recorded performance of a modern Nepali play in India, although as Rāi (1984: 35) points out it is likely that Nepalis were producing dramas before then. Motīrām Bhaṭṭa had earlier translated three dramas from Sanskrit—*Padmāvati* (1889), *Priyadarśikā* (1892) and *Śakuntalā* (1892?)—while Śambhuprasād also later translated *Priyadarśikā*, as well as several other Sanskrit dramas, of which only *Ratnāvalī* and *Śakuntalā* are available in printed form (Adhikārī 1977: 36). In 1902 Tīrthaprasād Āchārya's *Vichitra ratna bhaṇḍāgār* was published in Banaras; its second section ('Vedāntasār: nayām upanyās') is a story in dialogue (*saṃvādmay kathā*) which has dramatic stylistic features but is not intended as drama.

<sup>222</sup> Svāmṛ was born in Riḍikoṭ, western Nepal, in 1879 and in 1923 at the age of sixteen left for India where, strongly opposed to Rāṇā rule, he lived as an exile for the next fifteen years. Apart from *Aṭalbahādur* he is supposed to have written some twenty other books including a Nepali translation of *Śakuntalā* (Adhikārī 1977: 40-41).

Ghoṣ's plays were staged here but certainly his name was repeated from mouth to mouth', Pradhān (*ibid.*). The CAA was soon joined by another troupe, the Himalaya Amusement Association, which staged *Rukmaṇī haraṇ* (1913), *Rāj khānā* (1913) and *Rājā hariśchandra* (1916),<sup>223</sup> in 1916 it combined with the CAA to form the Himalayan and Children Amusement Association (HCAA).<sup>224</sup>

These developments, and the history of the birth and development of theatre in Darjeeling, have been the subject of detailed analysis by two valuable works: Kumār Pradhān's 'Dārjīlīnkā kehī purānā nāṭakarū ra buddha-charitra nāṭak' (1982: 95-176) and Indra Bahādur Rāi's *Dārjīlīmā nepālī nāṭakko ardhāśatābdī* (1984), as well as by numerous literary historians, including Adhikārī (1977) and Śarmā (1995/96a). As these early dramatic productions have been well-documented in comparison to other areas studied in this thesis there is no need to recover this ground here. However, it is worth briefly reassessing the relationship of theatrical performance to the print discursive sphere, and other activities which contributed to its social institutionalisation. Theatre was one of the foundations on which the process of institutionalisation rested and the individuals involved in its promotion were often concerned with other social projects.

Thus Dhanvīr Mukhiyā, who produced that first performance of *Aṭalbahādur*, went on to form the important Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan, discussed below. Assam's leading Nepali political activist, Chhaviḷāl Upādhyāya, also worked towards the development of education and drama, converting the school he had studied in into a Middle Vernacular School and then a Combined Middle School, supporting the youths of the Mazgaon Nepali Theatre Party in their efforts to build a permanent theatre, and helping to establish the Mazgaon Library (Rāi 1992: 47). In such developments, India-based Nepalis remained well in advance of Nepal, where the first drama staged for the general public was *Madan mohini* prepared by 'Ustād Nārāndās' and performed in Kathmandu during 1929's Gaijātrā festival. The first ticketed public performance—of Sama's *Mukunda indirā*—did

<sup>223</sup> This company was formed in 1913 by Pūrṇakumār Siṃh, Dhanprakāś Śāh, L. T. Lāmā and others (Rāi 1984: 40).

<sup>224</sup> This group underwent a further transformation to become, under the direction of Laden La, the Himalaya and Children Advancement Association; this company put on a theatrical performance to conclude the meeting which established the HPSU (*Nebulā* 1(2): 7; 4.3.3).

not take place until 1937 (Adhikārī 1977: 35).<sup>225</sup> Also noteworthy are the cosmopolitan influences on Darjeeling's Nepali theatre writers and producers and the inventiveness of their hybrid formats. As Rāī notes (1984: 39-40), this is revealed even by the names of the groups, the 'Children' element probably deriving from the inspiration provided by school performances in the missionary-run Loreto Convent and St Paul's School while the English word 'Amusement' was popularised by the Rink Amusement Hall, a skating rink set up by a German entrepreneur in ca. 1902. Sanskrit, Hindi-Urdu and Bengali plays provided rich seams for Nepali translators and adapters to mine, while the British influence on early productions was not limited to the names of companies but reflected the active involvement of at least one resident enthusiast, James Dunne, and the incorporation of English themes from Shakespeare to pantomime.<sup>226</sup>

While Pārasmaṇi and others from the start of the 1920s brought a more directly didactic approach to the theatre—as Secretary of the HCAA from 1921-1924, Pārasmaṇi wrote eight improving dramas such as *Sundar kumār* (1920), *Ratnāvalī* and *Chandragupta* (1922), and *Buddhacharitra nāṭak* (1923)—even the more low-brow productions offered the means to package the morality of social progress in a populist format. Thus, for example, Bhaiyā Siṃh's *Svāmi bhakti vā ādarśa nārī* (1925) recalls the idealistic role of the Indian *satī* as had been depicted in many journal articles (3.4.2). Yet the frame within which he sets the tale of good and evil—of a selfless heroine who counsels her wayward husband, and in which various sinners end up punished for their sins—is calculated to maximise its popular appeal. This apparently worthy subject matter justifies a melodramatic and risqué presentation of prostitution, general licentiousness, theft, betrayal and murder

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<sup>225</sup> There is room, however, for some doubt over these assertions. *Aśok sundarī nāṭikā*, written by Virendra Keśarī Arjyāl and others (1917/18), was published in Nepal by Dharma Śamśer Jaṅg Bahādūr Rāṇā: its publication suggests that performances may also not have been wholly private. A work of 130 pages, its stock characters (such as *apsarās*) and themes (such as *viraha*) suggest that it is probably a rendering of a Sanskrit original. It is packed with songs (helpfully reproduced with metre, *rāg* and *tāl* followed by a full musical notation) and the language is both Sanskritic and Hindi/Urdu-influenced. Also dating to just before *Madan mohinī* is a theatre programme from Kathmandu (*Āṅkhākā nasā thietar ko progrām*, 1928/29) in the Madan Puraskār Pustakālaya collection. A handwritten note implies that it was performed at the *rājgurū's nāchghar* but the twelve-page programme, printed by the Paśupat Press, at least brought an extended plot summary into public circulation.

<sup>226</sup> Hence HCAA productions of *King Lear* And *King John*, alongside *The Bottle-genie* (1927, Bhaiyā Siṃh) and *Aladdin* (1931, Harkabahādūr Śāhī); one Tibetan play was also staged.

which threatens to overwhelm the virtuous message. The overall effect is far removed from the pompous opining of most essayists but the process in which Siṃh was engaged is nonetheless an extension of their concerns. Attempts to entice a wider, and less sophisticated, audience may have traduced the refined literary values critics were seeking to promote but they were nonetheless effective. Plays were not confined to Darjeeling town itself but were also staged in Siṃhamārī and other villages, the HCAA travelling to perform in further-flung locations such as Pul Bajār and Jhepī (Rāi 1984: 17). As Rāi enjoins his readers when considering these pioneering plays (*ibid.*: 40): ‘Drama is not only literature, not only entertainment, but through both is also a third thing: it becomes an act (*kārya*). Rather than just looking at them in the form of literary works let us recognise those performed dramas also as an act in the Gorkhali *jāti*’s upliftment.’

#### 4.3.2. Libraries and literary associations

The concept of ‘amusement’ later translated itself into more serious territory with the founding (ca. 1926) of the Manvinod Pustakālaya in Darjeeling’s Judge Bazaar but this library project was only the latest in a series of similar undertakings.<sup>227</sup> Libraries were both an incarnation of the rhetoric of *vidyā* and *unnati* and a repository for it in its printed form. For the gentlemen of Kurseong, the remedy for the miserable state of Nepali society (its *adhogati*, ‘decline’) was to establish a library. For a library is more than just a collection of books: their appeal emphasises that such institutions are necessary forums for social interaction and development. The environment they provide for strangers to meet will strengthen social cohesion and allow discussion of projects for *unnati*. The idea that a Nepali community could be constructed by drawing hitherto unknown members into a common space—both physical and discursive—lies at the heart of the concept of an ‘imagined community’ and illustrates the transforming functionality of the public sphere: ‘This building will be suitable for unknown Gorkhals coming from afar to spend the night and to sit in groups of brothers to debate topics related to *unnati*’ (C1(1): 18-19). Libraries also offered the passage to information that could help Nepalis make sense of their own society. As Lakṣmīkānta Ārjyāl observed (1918: 14), a library could consolidate

<sup>227</sup> Chief movers in this project were Hariprasād Pradhān, Dharaṇīdhar and others (Rāi 1984: 40).

information without imposing cultural uniformity, and act as a catalyst for a chain of progress:

It is necessary to complete the task of *unnati* of the government and the people (*sarkār ra prajā*) by directly seeing or hearing of the types of place that fall within one's own country, by looking to the geography of that country of Nepal. Alongside this, by printing the writings and books written in the languages of Nepal's various *jātis* and, gathering them together with [other] printed books, establishing a library, people at large (*jan samāḥ*) will be encouraged to find out what sort of things there are in their own country, what jewels there are ... once a library has been established, some people are certain to gain a desire to learn their own mother tongues, and once the desire has been aroused in society then there can be no doubt that the task will be accomplished.

The relationship between opening the sources of knowledge, bringing together members of society for intellectual interaction, and enhancing the potential for concrete social reform rapidly came to be widely acknowledged. Thus Dīpakeśvar Śarmā's poem entitled 'In praise of libraries' (1918c: 8) is part standard eulogy of *vidyā*, part recognition of actual social dynamics: 'The library is an entire object of limitless joy ... The stream of knowledge flows here eternal and forever ... Where great worthy men gather in meetings/holding papers in their hands and considering affairs'.<sup>228</sup> It was accepted that libraries could form a cornerstone of an incipient civil society, where Nepalis could start to participate in the type of debate enjoyed by Europeans. This was an inspiration for Pratimān Siṃh Lāmā (1918b: 20): 'Wherever there are large numbers of Gorkhalis, there in each place we must open at least a debating club, if not a library.' Of course, debate might be open but the structure inherent in even such a modest organisation implied a replication of social hierarchy. Lāmā suggested that clubs should elect honourable and worthy (*mānya ra yogya*) gentlemen to positions of Chairman, Assistant Chairman, Treasurer, etc., and that they should organise a debate on a set topic at least once a week, if not daily: 'with five, ten or twenty people gathering together for this purpose, all sorts of new subjects for society (*samājkā navīn navīn viṣay*) will keep on arising' (*ibid.*: 21). The duty to take the initiative—and the blame for lack of progress to date—lay with the leaders of society, whom Lāmā (*ibid.*: 21) compares unfavourably to Europeans:

... but how would a task such as this endear itself to us Gorkhalis? For our leaders, filling their stomachs is all that counts; where is the "time" for them to look after others, to make the slightest social reforms? Look at the Darjeeling Planters' Association! [Look at] how they are carrying out their work. Look also at their number. If we could only follow their

<sup>228</sup> This poem is reprinted in Bhaṭṭarāi (1988/89: 401).

example what advantage we could reap, what honour we could achieve. Honourable leaders of our country (*mānyavar deśkā netā ho*)! Now arise and arouse your assistants, devote your minds to the reform of society, otherwise the hill of blame for our *avanati* will be collapsing on your own heads.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the call for the establishment of libraries and debating clubs had palpable political overtones, recalling the exhortations of other writers to unite behind a cause and exercise the power of organised society. Even Pārasmaṇi's first venture in this field in his schooldays—insisting that the Darjeeling Government High School complement its Hindī Sāhitya Samāj with a Gorkhā Sāhitya Samāj and eventually taking the initiative himself (Pradhan 1997: 9-10)—can be seen as a forerunner of the campaigns for recognition that mobilised Indian Nepalis until the last decade of the twentieth century. The first Nepali public library project (in Nepal or India) was probably the Gorkha Library in Kurseong, established on 8 June 1913.<sup>229</sup> However in Banaras, where the Nepali Library was established in 1915, its founders were clearly not aware that they had been pre-empted by Nepalis resident a long way from their traditional seat of learning (*Chandra* 1(7): 19):

These days the civilised people of various *jātis* have opened many libraries for the sake of the *unnati* of their language. Until now Nepalis had not opened a single library. By our good fortune today the young lovers of learning of the holy area (*punyaśeṭra*) of Kashi have opened with great enthusiasm a Nepali Library for the benefit of those sad, poor people who cannot even buy books and as a service to other gentlemen as well. This library's main duty is to bring about the *unnati* of the Nepali language. It is fitting that Nepalis alone should promote their own mother tongue with body, mind, and money (*tan, man, dhan dvārā*). For this reason it is a good thing for gentlemen to bring about *unnati* of this library by generously donating books, money, newspapers, etc.

The list of those who have contributed so far consists almost entirely of Brāhmaṇs, including the publishers Viśvarāj Harihar, Mādhav Prasād Regmī, and Mādhv Prasād (who donated *Chandra* and a large picture of Emperor George V), and the writers Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā, Sūryavikram, and Dharaṇīdhar.<sup>230</sup> Contributions were not limited to Nepali works: Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā sent the *Indian Daily News*, Paṇḍit Gaṅgānāth Śarmā the Hindi monthly *Maryādā*. Three years later, a further appeal for this library (*C1*(1): 21) was

<sup>229</sup> See Pradhān (1993b: 225) and Śarmā (1976b: 32) for details. Both of these articles provide useful general overviews of the Gorkha Library, Pradhān dealing with its establishment and early years (during which he became personally associated with the library), and Śarmā with the history of the library until 1961.

<sup>230</sup> The Rāmśaiṅkar Lāl who donated paper to print one thousand *nivedan patra* may have been Indian or a rare instance of a *madhesī* Nepali linked to projects dominated by hill Bāhuns (cf. 5.6). In November 1915 Regmī had printed and published 1000 copies of a five-page booklet of the library's rules and regulations, to be distributed free of charge (*SP*).

couched in similar language (indeed the phrase about poor people who could not afford to buy books was copied from the original appeal in *Chandra*). It claimed that poor members of other *jāti*s have flourished after gaining access to libraries and thus ‘we Nepalis of Kashi’ aimed to provide a similar arrangement for the use of ordinary people (*sarva sādharmaṇ kā upayog nimitta*). Emphasising the poverty of many students from the hills of Nepal (cf. fn. 348), the appeal played on readers’ consciences: ‘whether or not this institution—opened for the benefit of such students—will be the subject of gentlemen’s compassion is something that you yourselves must decide.’ The library admitted that its poor financial state had hampered its work and prevented it from fulfilling the role envisaged.

Nonetheless, the library formed a focus for *unnati*-related activities in the city and beyond. While dominated by Banaras-based Brāhmaṇs, the library’s fourth anniversary ceremony (held on the afternoon of 2 Feb 1919) also attracted Pārasmaṇi and Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān from Kurseong, the distinguished-sounding Captain Bakhān Siṃh Ṭhākur Sardār Bahādur and one F.N. Śarmā from Parāsī in south central Nepal. This occasion also united the SūDhaPā trio before they would meet in Darjeeling: Dharaṇīdhar (as previous Secretary and Chair of the library) offered some words, while Sūryavikram (as chair of the welcome committee) opened proceedings and gave his own speech on the state of the world today (Jñāvālī 1919b, see 3.2.2). Other speakers (as reported in C2(3): 88-89) were less radical and perhaps made contributions more typical of a public gathering of this type: Paṇḍit Vāmdev Śarmā ‘sang of Nepal’s glory in a loud voice’ and related learning to religion in his disappointment that Nepalis, as subjects of a *mokṣa bhūmi*, should still remain bereft of *vidyā*; the chairman apparently described his sorrow at the lack of learning in the Nepali *jāti* in such moving terms that he left many of his audience in tears, while the ‘worthy editor of *Chandrikā*’ (who almost certainly wrote this report himself) is described as having ‘demonstrated his sympathy for the pitiful state of the library in exceptionally sweet and elegant words’.

The older Kurseong Gorkha Library could trace its origins to May 1913, when local friends supported J. Pāval, a Lepcha,<sup>231</sup> in setting up a reading club in his own house. It was when this became inconvenient that he suggested they should establish a dedicated library building. On 8 June 1916 a building was taken on rent and an organisation called Gorkha Library founded but while it attracted enthusiastic voluntary support it suffered from a high turnover of officers.<sup>232</sup> The organisation's stated main aim was to bring about the *unnati*—social, moral, mental, etc.—of the hill (*pārvatīya*) society in particular, and other societies in general, *pārvatīya* here apparently standing for Nepali (5.2.1). The library's finances were initially precarious—it survived on small donations and by May 1915 had only around Rs 100 in hand—but generous patronage transformed its situation. In April 1915 a well-wisher, the local philanthropist Sardār Bahādur Lāmā (see Appendix 3), offered to support the construction of a new library building (C1(8-9): 32) and eventually his Rs 500 donation was matched by Kurseong's Municipality (C1(1): 18-19).<sup>233</sup> Many obstacles delayed the work but the building was completed in late 1918, thanks largely to the efforts of Dhan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān. As well as stocking Hindi, Nepali and English books, the library subscribed to a cosmopolitan range of journals: *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Darjeeling Visitor*, *Sarasvatī*, *Sanātandharma Patākā*, *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*, *Chandrikā*, *Gorkhālī*, *Bālsakhā*, *Industry*, *Indian Daily News* and government publications courtesy of the authorities (C1(8-9): 33).

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<sup>231</sup> Pāval was Lepcha although he has been mistakenly identified as both British (Powell) and Bengali (Pal). He later moved to Kalimpong and became Secretary of the Kalimpong Branch of the Hillmen's Association (Nagendramāṇi Pradhān, interview 18/05/01).

<sup>232</sup> For some time the president of the organisation was Dhan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān. When he was forced to relinquish the post through lack of time he remained as Patron but Hanjit Devān Rāi took over full executive responsibility. As he in turn became too busy to fulfil his duties Chautariyā Dhan Prakāś Śāh took over. At the founding of the organisation Bhakta Bīr Thāpā had been appointed Secretary; when he was appointed vice-president Maṇi Nārāyaṇ took his place running day to day business. Then Thāpā had to take his leave and was replaced by Pūrṇa Nārāyaṇ Pradhān; in 1918 elections he was in turn succeeded with unanimous approval by Tīkabīr Rāi. At first the enthusiastic supporter Buddhi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān had given most books but he died prematurely. Realising that they had to carry on his work somehow they appointed his brother Śiva Nārāyaṇ Pradhān as *pustakādhyakṣa*; when he too died in October 1917 he was replaced by Pārasmaṇi (C1(8-9): 29).

<sup>233</sup> Eventually estimates for the new building rose to Rs 3,000 plus the cost of suitable furniture, etc. In September 1918 *Chandrikā* (1(8-9): 34) reported that Rs 2,300 had been raised and some 1,000 more would be needed. It observed that the war made it even more difficult to proceed according to plan but obstacles must be met with greater effort and determination: after all, *udyog* is the root of *unnati*.

As Secretary, Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān reported to the fifth annual meeting held on 18 August 1918. *Chandrikā* reproduced his speech and presented its own news report on the occasion. Kul Bahādur Pradhān and Motī Chand Pradhān, Sub Deputy Collectors, were elected to the executive committee (C1(8-9): 38). A later announcement (C1(10-11): inside frontispiece) from the library announced that Brāhmaṇ priests had completed the house-warming rituals of the new building on 12 December and that it would open to the public on 1 January. The journal carried detailed description of the opening of the new library building written by Śeṣ Maṇi. The I.C.S. officer H. Quinton was placed in the chair and garlanded by two boys from the Gorkha Amateur Club, who had just performed some welcome songs (reproduced in C2(3): 93-94). In a deliberately anti-communal gesture, one wore Nepali dress and offered a garland of flowers while the other wore Bhutia costume and offered a silk scarf (C2(1): 27), while a further effort towards inclusiveness—presumably aimed specifically at non-Nepali guests but also demonstrating their hosts' sophistication—was Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān's presentation in both English and Nepali.<sup>234</sup> He urged all to remember their duty to sustain the library: 'in fact, this institution was opened for the benefit of our Nepali *jāti*'. Dharaṇīdhar spoke enthusiastically of *unnati* and the 'true path' but more exhilarating was his recital of the poem 'Jāga jāga' (C2(1): 28).

The success of the Kurseong project inspired others. Shortly after the opening of its building, there was an appeal from the Darjeeling Gorkha Samiti for donations to help establish the organisation, acquire its own building and set up a school and small library (C2(4): 117). Meanwhile, parallel developments were starting to take place in Nepal. Gaṇeśdatta, Secretary of Śrī Gorkhā Śāradā Bhavan Pustakālaya in Sirahā published his appeal for assistance for the library under the title 'A library is itself a school'.<sup>235</sup> However,

<sup>234</sup> The meeting was fairly cosmopolitan: later speakers included Lt. Col. Ansell, Assistant Secretary Pārasmaṇi, B.N. Bannerji, Dharaṇīdhar, and Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇ Agravālā in English, Nepali and Hindi.

<sup>235</sup> 'Pustakālayanai vidyālaya ho' (C1(10): 24): 'Readers! It is the duty of we humans alone to promote learning with as much effort as possible. To promote learning we must open schools and libraries in many places. Recently here in Sirahā the English and Sanskrit-teaching Chandramāṇik Pāṭhśālā has opened with public contributions. The school is also now to receive assistance from the government. For the benefit of the Gorkha language's *unnati* and for the sake of *dharma* alongside the *pāṭhśālā* we have also opened the Śrī Gorkhā Śāradā Bhavan Pustakālaya. Including Hindi and Sanskrit there are 70-80 books. Newspapers such as the daily *Bhāratmitra*, the weekly *Pratāp*, *Baṅgavāsī*, *Baṅgālī*, and journals such as *Sarasvatī*, *Brāhmaṇ Sarvasva*, *Chandrikā*, *Indian Review*,

the major development in institutionalising the Nepali public sphere in Darjeeling, and with repercussions far beyond, was the establishment of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan (NSS) in 1924. This institution was inspired by similar Hindi organisations, in particular the Kāśī Nāgarī Prachāriṇī Sabhā (founded 1893), whose first president, Bābū Rādhākṛṣṇadās, was a literary intimate and first cousin of Hariśchandra (Dalmia 1996: 141, King 1994: 142-145). The founding of the NSS has been discussed by previous writers, notably Pradhān (1982), Hutt (1997a) and Onta (1996a and 1996c), all of whom have analysed its significance in terms of the debate on Nepali *jāti* identity which it engendered.<sup>236</sup> This area is discussed in 5.5, while the composition of the Sammelan and the role of its publications are examined in the following sections of this chapter. Here we may note that the Sammelan provided an important platform for the activities of leading writers such as SūDhaPā and a focus for activities—such as public discussions, textbook and literary publication—which implemented social as well as cultural goals.

While the NSS's activities expanded in the early 1930s following a few years' lull, Dhanvīr Mukhiyā was planning the launch of a new cultural forum. The Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan (GDNS) was formed in 1932 amidst some controversy. Mukhiyā was not on the best of terms with the leading establishment figure Laden La—his Hill-Peoples' Social Union was the only major local organisation of which Mukhiyā was not an active member—and the GDNS faced opposition from the outset. Following a leafleting campaign which claimed that it was a political undertaking some backers withdrew their support and repeated efforts were made to force the organisation out of its temporary home (Rāi 1984: 8). Yet Mukhiyā stood firm and fulfilled his vision of creating an institution that linked cultural promotion to social welfare. The GDNS became the undisputed centre for Nepali theatrical productions while pursuing a mission to the poorer members of society by, for example, carrying out funeral rites for destitutes; it carries out these dual functions to this day. The NSS has similarly survived the decades and remains one of the leading Nepali cultural foundations in India. Along with the longevity of the Kurseong Gorkha Library, the

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*Modern Review* are coming. As this is a place in the Tarai without *unnati* in learning one hope that there will be *unnati* day by day.'

<sup>236</sup> The speech given by Pārasmaṇi at the founding meeting ('Hāmro avasthā') is reproduced in Pradhān (1991: 139-43).

lasting achievements of these institutions demonstrate the success with which rhetorical concerns for social progress were transformed into durable reality, and with which public space was occupied and moulded for the promotion of socio-cultural goals.

#### 4.3.3. *Political consciousness and organisation*

Political activity within India's Nepali community in the period of study can be separated into three broad strands. First, in a tradition stretching back centuries, Banaras was a centre for plotting against the established regime in Nepal (cf. Appendix 1). Most of these activities are best described as conspiratorial in nature, often centring on feuds between ruling factions or small-scale efforts at revenge by ousted courtiers or civil servants. They were thus not part of the public realm and—apart from rare and isolated incidents—it was only in the 1940s that anti-Rāṇā activism became a public movement, spawning open debate and the organisation of identifiable parties which sought to claim public space and generate a public profile. Second, from the first decade of the twentieth century, local issues affecting the status, livelihoods, or general well-being of established Indian Nepali communities prompted a number of diverse campaigns that mobilised public support. These efforts can be interpreted as a political aspect of the urge for *jāti* improvement, and they reached a degree of maturity and universality with the founding of the All-India Gorkha League in 1923. Third, many Indian Nepalis became increasingly involved in working towards Indian independence, an area of history that several recent Indian Nepali writers have sought to rediscover and publicise. These three strands were, of course, intertwined. For example, the organised anti-Rāṇā movement came to model itself on the party politics of India—hence the Nepali Congress and Communist parties which were born in Banaras and Calcutta—and tasted success only as a result of Indian independence.

The history of Nepali political activism is relatively well-documented, and the subject of an ever-growing number of studies in Nepal and India. The concern of this section is not to recount the chains of developments that have already been recorded elsewhere, but to question the relationship of the discursive public sphere to the emergence of political consciousness and mobilisation. Habermas (1989: 51) interpreted the establishment of 'a sphere of criticism of public authority' by 'the public of private people making use of their

reason' as resulting from a process of functionally converting the 'public sphere in the world of letters already equipped with institutions of the public and with forums for discussion'. Despite the usual proviso that his study of European (and here especially British) public-political culture does not offer a universal model for transplantation, this conceptualisation nevertheless offers a useful starting point for analysing the birth of a Nepali public-political culture. The foregoing sections have established that the Nepali public sphere in India had, albeit to a very limited extent, produced public institutions and generated reasoned discussion in a range of forums. This section examines how the sphere thus constructed addressed political issues, and the extent to which it enabled participation in criticism of public authority.

One must, however, start by acknowledging that one of the most striking features of the nascent Nepali public sphere was its decidedly apolitical nature. Until the arrival of Ṭhākur Chandan Simh's *Gorkhā Saṃsār* in 1926 all Nepali journals explicitly stated their refusal to engage in politics or to accept articles on political topics: the affiliation of those who pioneered these channels for print discourse was, at least officially, to non-politicism. In some cases this neutral facade was necessary cover in a potentially dangerous line of work. The environment in both Nepal and India during the period under consideration was less than conducive to political organisation. The Rāṅgā regime remained authoritarian and wary of any signs of potential dissent; in their eyes even the most innocent publishing activities were potentially dubious, hence the need even for Rāmmani Āchārya Dīkṣit to adopt a pseudonym when producing the innocuous *Mādhavi*. Literary work was thus the subject of continual supervision and repression resulting in a series of *parvas* (incidents): the 'Sūktisindhu parva' (1917/18), 'Sedhāim parva' (1918/19) in which a search of Vaijanāth Sedhāim's house revealed copies of Dharaṅīdhar's *Naivedya* and *Pañchāmṛta* sent to him by Pārasmani and led to his imprisonment (Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi 1999/2000a: 145), and most famously the 'makai parva' (1920; see Pauḍel (1989) and glossary).

Beyond the fear of government retribution there was also direct patronage, both from British and Nepalese authorities (who frequently, in any case, saw their interests as overlapping). Nepali literary histories, particularly those written in the Panchayat period, have often related all literature of the few decades prior to 1950/51 to anti-Rāṅgā sentiment;

this period is frequently referred to as the ‘krāntipūrva yug’ (pre-revolutionary era) and the name and focus imply that revolutionary sentiments were a major feature of literature. Coupled with the widespread view of Nepal as entirely ‘isolated’ in this period, this has led to an alarmingly large historical blind spot: many serious writers simply do not consider the clearly evidenced roots of post-1950 political activity in Nepal within the public and institutional culture of India-based Nepalis from early in the twentieth century. Even the otherwise excellent *People, Politics and Ideology* (Hoftun, Raeper and Whelpton 1999) is premised on the assumption that Nepal’s ‘isolation’ until 1950 means that developments prior to this have, effectively, no bearing on the subsequent story of political development. So ‘the history of democracy in Nepal, which is the subject of this study, is thus limited to the last half-century. The story begins with the opening of the country to the outside world in 1950-51 ...’ (*ibid.*: ix). This is in consonance with ‘awakening’-themed histories such as Uprety’s (1992) which, although taking a much wider view and paying detailed attention to earlier history, tend towards assumptions coloured by hindsight. Hence the oft-repeated, but empirically dubious, assertion that the *makai parva* and Dharaṇīdhar’s ‘Jāga jāga’ can be interpreted as the seeds of the 1950 ‘revolution’. In both cases, the fundamental requirement to interpret the intention of the actors in question is ignored: while the *makai parva* can certainly speak of Chandra Śamśer’s administration, we are not sure that Kṛṣṇalāl Adhikārī wrote the controversial book, let alone what his motivation might have been. On the other hand, the wealth of evidence that does exist of the opinions and activities of Dharaṇīdhar suggest very much that he was much more of a public moralist and social reformer torn between tradition and progress than a revolutionary (3.4.2). Rāī (1992/93: 8) has further highlighted the narrowness of the traditional reading of ‘Jāga jāga’ and the blinkered reduction of its multiple meanings to two simple statements, of anti-Rāṇā sentiment and *jāti*-love. Nevertheless, Uprety counts Dharaṇīdhar and Kṛṣṇalāl as lodestars of the ‘Revolutionary Intelligentsia’, and his lead has been widely followed, to the extent that their supposed radicalism is one of the starting points for Karki and Seddon’s recent contextualisation of the Maoist movement, featuring near the head of their opening section on ‘The history of rebellion in Nepal’ (2003: 4-5). Yet it was this same ‘radical anti-Rāṇā’ Dharaṇīdhar who invited Prime Minister Juddha Śamśer’s eldest son General Bahādur

Śamśer (in 1934 to become Nepal's first resident ambassador in London) to preside over the consecration of Dhīr Dhām, the major Nepali temple in Darjeeling.<sup>237</sup>

Relations between reformist intellectuals in India and the Rāṇā regime are thus hard to reduce to a picture of direct confrontation. Writers' contributions stretched from the blatantly sycophantic<sup>238</sup> to the openly rebellious<sup>239</sup> but more often occupied an ambivalent middle ground. The Rāṇās' occasional endorsement of writers and later involvement in literature presents a more complex picture than might be imagined from descriptions of their repressive tendencies. Śambhuprasād took refuge from Rāṇā Nepal in Banaras, yet it was Chandra Śamśer who endorsed his *āsukavi* title; similarly, Bhānubhakta wrote some of *Rāmāyaṇa* in prison but had his *ādikavi* title confirmed only when it received the imprimatur of Chandra's successor Juddha Śamśer, who introduced the NSS's commemorative collection of essays on him (Jñavālī 1940). In relation to Darjeeling, the Rāṇās sent spies to investigate Pārasmaṇi's *Chandrikā*, and Sūryavikram was imprisoned at their behest in 1944, but in preparing his biography of Dravya Śāh—one of a series of historical works which Onta (1996a) argues provided the foundations for a nationalist historiography which vilified Rāṇā rule—he received generous assistance from senior Rāṇās.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Indra Bahadur Rai, personal communication. Cf. Jñavālī (1998: 2).

<sup>238</sup> For example an anonymous 'patriot' (Svadeś Premī Bhakta 1921, attributed by the OIOC catalogue to Rāmprasād Satyāl) published a description of Chandra Śamśer's Nepal as an ideal *rāmraṅjya*. The book's cover states that it is to be distributed free of charge to preserve people from the betrayal of rebels and deceivers.

<sup>239</sup> The most obvious example—disturbing to British authorities but perhaps more so to Chandra Śamśer—is that of Pirthimon Thapa: 'Chandra Shamsher was very much disturbed when the Resident informed him that a Nepalese named Pirthimon Thapa [sic] was among the speakers at a meeting attacking British rule, and that he and his associates wanted to start a newspaper in India [*Gorkhā Sāthī*] which would also be sent to Nepal. The speeches made by Thapa and N.L. Ghose, an Indian Christian, are worth noting here as reported by the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta. They clearly show dangerous signs ...' (Husain 1970: 180). This episode is described and analysed by Onta (1996c: 119-124).

<sup>240</sup> The preface (Jñavālī 1933) explains that when Sūryavikram travelled to Kathmandu to look for materials on the life of Pṛthvinārāyaṇ he came across two further *vaṃśāvalīs*: one of Dravya Śāh (in the Darbar library) and the other a lengthy one of the Gorkha kings including him (in Keśar Śamśer's library). It was thanks only to Prime Minister Juddha Śamśer's indulgence that he was allowed to use the Darbar library and copy relevant books; he offers similar thanks to Keśar Śamśer (Chandra's son). Meanwhile in his foreword on behalf of the publishers, NSS chairman Hanjit Devān Rāi concluded his comments with the saying 'garne bhandā garāune thulo' ('getting done is better than doing') to express his thanks to Nepal's Director-General of Public Instruction Mṛgendra Śamśer, who is

Within India, however, there was more potential for the founding of associations with implicit or explicit political aims, or at least social/religious reformist intentions. The long history of progressive movements such as the Arya Samaj and Brahmos followed by political organisation through the Indian National Congress had no parallel within Nepal. Yet Nepalis in India were placed in the awkward situation of being seen by many fellow-Indians as lapdogs of the British, loyal enforcers of their rule and thus tainted by collusion with the regime. This is a shadow from which Indian Nepalis are still trying to emerge but recent trends in historiography suggest that the conflicting urges of celebrating brave Gurkha deeds and reclaiming a history of anti-British activism are hard to reconcile. Government patronage—or, in terms of language recognition, the quest for it—was a feature of much Nepali literary-cultural institutionalisation.<sup>241</sup> The element of dependency this introduced, whether willing or unwilling, restricted the potential for public forums to act as arenas for criticism of authority as well as introducing an extra dynamic into political issues. Thus before the public sphere could engage directly with politics, it had to serve as a testing ground for the negotiation of boundaries between cultural and political goals, between patronage and control. For example, while the Military Department was of great assistance in Maṇisimh Guruṅ's campaign for Nepali education in Assam, DSP Laden La was willing to use the strong arm of the law to obstruct the progress of Nepali in Darjeeling. Meanwhile British administrators were torn between an increasing dependence on Gurkha troops (especially for internal security) and suspicions of their ultimate loyalties and the wisdom of having them settled in India.<sup>242</sup>

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described as having shown great indulgence to the NSS and offered much help to the author. Mrgendra Samser also backed the application by Sūryavikram, Dharaṇīdhar and Hariprasād Pradhān to Calcutta University to replace 'Pārvaṭīya' with 'Nepāli' as language name (cf. *Table 4-1*, p. 175).

<sup>241</sup> For example, as Hariprasād Pradhān recalled (1935: 68), it was thanks to the sympathy of the West Bengal Education Department that serving employees (such as Pārasmaṇi) were allowed to undertake work for the NSS, from which they might otherwise have been debarred under civil service rules.

*Chandrikā*<sup>242</sup> Such suspicions of loyalties dated to a period when Nepal itself was seen as a continuing threat. For example, Hathorn (1863: 86) questioned the military wisdom of retaining the Sebundy Sappers and Miners: they are too busy repairing roads to be militarily prepared and 'the only foes capable of giving us real trouble in these hills are the Nepalese; and the Sappers, being with few exceptions themselves Nepalese, would in the event of an outbreak with Nepal become a source of weakness, not of strength.'

As the nationalist movement built up momentum, Nepalis' declarations of deliberate disassociation from politics were often simply code for loyalism. The large public meeting called in Darjeeling on 23 December 1934 to found the Hill-Peoples' Social Union (HPSU) was thus combined with the establishment of a local Antiterrorist League for Darjeeling, to be affiliated with Bengal's Central and Provincial Antiterrorist Movement (*Nebulā* 1(1): 11).<sup>243</sup> Indeed, the combination of vocal support for imperial rule with campaigns for local reforms is typical of Nepali politics in the Darjeeling area. Demands for a separate administration for Darjeeling date to at least 1907, when the Hillmen's Association—whose purpose was described by Laden La (1935: 2) as 'to safeguard and advocate the legitimate interests of the Hill-people in the sphere of politics'—submitted a memorandum requesting that 'the Government should plan to create a separate unit comprising the Darjeeling with the portion of Jalpaiguri district which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865.'<sup>244</sup> This demand was repeated to the Simon Commission of 1928 but in the meantime—from 1912 to 1935—Darjeeling had been declared an 'excluded area' (Timsina 1992: 36-37).<sup>245</sup> When India Secretary Montague visited India in 1919 a deputation of 'Darjeeling District's hill-dwelling people' travelled to Calcutta to present him and Chelmsford with a petition. The year after the founding of the HPSU, Hariprasād Pradhān (1935: 69-70) recalled the essence of this plea:

The main objective of us hill-dwellers is to live freely (*svachchhanda bhāvle*) under the sheltering umbrella of the honourable British government, carrying on our own behaviour and social customs that have been passed down from generations. Our leaders of that time placed their request before the British government's then representatives in clear language, stating that we had no interest in political change in India. But according to that speech our

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<sup>243</sup> Laden La (1935: 4, 7) also used his main address to praise British rule—'We live under the aegis of the benign British Government. We enjoy all the blessings of an enlightened and benevolent Government'—and closed the meeting with a further loyalist gesture: 'will you all rise up now and salute our beloved King-Emperor and the Union Jack with our Union Salute?'

<sup>244</sup> There is some confusion over when the Hillmen's Association came into being: the 1907 petition was probably the work of a relatively informal grouping. Subba (1992: 78-79) concludes on the basis of reasonable evidence that the Association originated sometime after 1917 but before 1919.

<sup>245</sup> Representatives of Darjeeling District had also submitted a memorandum to the Bengal Government in November 1917 demanding the creation of a separate administrative unit (Subba 1992: 77; Bhandari 1986:19).

See Nar Bahādur Gurūn (1971: 6-16) on the campaign for a separate status. Gurūn himself was a prominent Darjeeling politician—and ultimately Deputy Minister in the West Bengal government—who was intimately involved with post-Independence campaigns for the district's autonomy and recognition for the Nepali language.

leaders made a vehement campaign (*ghor āndolan*) to the British government that we Nepalis should also see the propagation of our ancestral Nepali language among our Nepalis, that there should be arrangements for our children to learn their mother tongue in schools and that the medium of instruction in schools for our children should be our mother language.

In other words, while there were principled staunch supporters of British rule, support at the national level was also seen as a commodity that could be traded for lesser objectives. One could argue that this was a calculated trade-off in the search for a degree of political leverage: as a small community with little economic or numerical clout, Nepali social leaders played what cards they had to advance limited interests. They also forged alliances on a practical basis, with the campaign for Darjeeling's exclusion from Bengal backed by the Darjeeling Planters' Association and the European Association, who had their own interests in the matter (Subba 1992: 78-79). The fact that many social leaders also gained their status through the state-sponsored institutions and government service further militated against the public sphere developing fuller critiques of authority. We have seen above that it was only from the start of the 1920s that figures such as SūDhaPā managed to parlay educational status and official employment into rapidly-expanding cultural influence. That they should be wary of pulling this rug from under their own feet while no potential replacement system of government offered distinct advantages is understandable.<sup>246</sup> This pattern of state legitimisation of a remodelled social hierarchy concentrated disproportionate power over public developments in the hands of a few members of society, as 4.4 illustrates. For example, the illustrious Sardār Bahādur Lieutenant-Colonel Govardhan Guruṅ, mentioned in George V's New Year's honours of 1935, was by that time President of the Gorkha Officers Association and the Gorkha Association.<sup>247</sup> It was at Guruṅ's insistence that the erstwhile Gorkha Samiti ('Committee')—which had been kept alive by

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<sup>246</sup> Criticism of the Rāṅā regime was a slightly different matter, despite British self-interested support of the status quo in Nepal. While *Chandrikā* frequently praised Chandra Śamser, at least in as far as he supported certain educational projects, there are also hints at rebellious sentiments. In issue 1(12), a letter from Chandramān Śreṣṭha of Nepal praises Dharaṅīdhar for his brave and thought-provoking poem 'Udbodhan'. Referring to line 'phālī deū ḍarko aba thailo' ('now throw away the plate of fear') he boldly asks 'fear of whom? Let the readers consider this'. To this Pārasmaṅi added a potentially provocative editorial footnote: 'Those who commit theft, adultery and other such serious sins may fear. But those who have not stolen, who have not committed adultery, who have done no wrong to anyone, what need they fear?'

<sup>247</sup> A Gurkha recruitment centre was in operation at Ghoom, just outside Darjeeling, by 1902. Unlike Dehradun and Shillong, however, Darjeeling was not home to any Gurkha regiments.

Harisimh Thāpā, former proprietor of *Chandrikā*—changed its name to ‘Association’: the British government apparently objected to the connotations of ‘samiti’ (Rāi 1984: 9). He was also a senior official or member of some ten other organisations, including the important HPSU and NSS (*Nebulā* 1(1): 9). Further, there can be little doubt that inter-communal tensions, for example among Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas in Darjeeling-Sikkim, were convenient for the British and perhaps encouraged. Initially, the British generally saw the Nepalis as performing a useful function in holding Tibetan influence at bay in the central (Nepalese) and eastern Himalaya, as illustrated by Risley’s Machiavellian observations ([1894] 1973: xx) on the value of racial and religious tensions:

The Lepchas ... are rapidly dying out; while from the west, the industrious Newars and Goorkhas of Nepal are pressing forward to clear and cultivate the large areas of unoccupied land on which the European tea-planters of Darjeeling have already cast longing eyes. The influx of these hereditary enemies of Tibet is our surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence ... In Sikkim, as in India, Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism ... Thus race and religion, the prime movers of the Asiatic world, will settle the Sikkim difficulty for us, in their own way.

But if the spread of Hinduism was to assist British interests in Sikkim, later administrators found its influence, and the spread of Nepali settlers, more troubling. In 1934, Morris (RIGB: 11) observed that ‘the Bhutanese are pure Buddhists and are thus free from the corrupting influences of modern Hinduism, which the present Government of Nepal is doing its best to encourage.’ According to his observations Nepali settlers left their wives at home when they first moved to Bhutan but many subsequently married there and later brought over their original wives and children. With large and quickly growing families (*ibid.*: 18):

I cannot personally see what is to prevent the Bhutanese being gradually but surely outnumbered by the Nepalese. That this danger is to some extent realised is apparent from the fact that in theory, at any rate, a line has now been fixed north of which Nepalese are not permitted to settle: but, as I have already pointed out, in actual practice there is little or nothing to prevent the continued movement northward. I should also mention that whilst settlers in Bhutan are technically subjects of the Maharaja they remain in sentiment and culture subjects of the King of Nepal.

By this stage, local interests in continuing to solicit the patronage of central government naturally shifted towards a demonstration of unity. Since the ‘Sikkim difficulty’ had been

effectively resolved over decades of *de facto* British control,<sup>248</sup> the temptation towards a divide and rule policy had receded. Meanwhile, the various hill communities could see that their differences need not prevent combined action on pressing issues such as education, local administration and economic opportunity. It was to work towards these goals, and to foster a sense of unity, that the HPSU was founded by a large public convention attended by some six hundred representatives of different communities from across the Darjeeling district, including from villages and tea estates (*Nebulā* 1(1): 10). While speaker after speaker opined on the poor relations between Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas, and the need to cast aside differences, one feature is notable: the Nepali language had become the *lingua franca* for public interaction beyond the Nepali community itself.<sup>249</sup> Govardhan Guruṅg referred to some people's concern that establishing the HPSU might damage the interests of other societies such as the Gorkha Association, Buddhist Association, GDNS, Manovinod Library, Lepcha Association, etc. What is interesting is not his refutation of these fears but the implicit acceptance that the HPSU was occupying the same public space as these institutions. Despite their apparently distinct activities, this is a recognition that social, cultural, literary and political organisations operated on the basis of a similar relationship with their membership and the wider public. Thus his answer is not that the more overtly political goals of the HPSU set it apart, but simply that the HPSU would not be allowed to absorb other societies as membership would be only on an individual basis. By the 1930s the Nepali public sphere in Darjeeling had thus both extended and delimited itself, its increasing concern with local politics expanding to include inter-communal relations but accompanied by a corresponding decline in engagement with political issues affecting Nepali society as a whole.

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<sup>248</sup> Following the British expeditionary force's defeat of Tibet at Lungthu in Sikkim (September 1888), Claude White was appointed as the first British Political Officer in Sikkim (1889) and acted as the *de facto* ruler while the Maharaja was forced to reside in Kalimpong. By 1895 the Maharaja was allowed to leave Kalimpong but remained restricted to the Darjeeling area as British control was consolidated; he finally regained a degree of authority following a meeting with the Prince of Wales in Calcutta in 1905.

<sup>249</sup> Thus the Lepcha representative from Kalimpong (J. Pāval, who was a founder of the KGL; 4.3.2) spoke in Nepali; similarly a (tendentious) essay on the meaning in Lepcha of the word 'nebulā' by Pāsāṅg Ṭārgen is also in Nepali (*Nebulā* 1(1): 6-7). At the meeting, Laden La and two Nepalis from Kurseong (Mr N.B. Rai, Engineer and Mr Hem Narayan Pradhan, BA) opted to speak in English (*Nebulā* 1(2): 1-10).

In a similar vein to Morris's report on Bhutan, concerns at the negative effects of Nepali migration had been expressed by a number of local administrators in a 1930 report, *Extension of Gurkhali Population along the North-East Frontier of India*. Political activities in Assam also had their roots in local issues and were initially fairly detached from developments elsewhere in India. Many Nepalis—predominantly Bāhun-chhetrīs and thus a society very different in composition to that of Darjeeling—had settled as graziers, in particular in the Kaziranga area. In 1905 a preliminary notification that Kaziranga would become a reserved forest was issued and some settlers were evicted; from 1907 onwards the government continually raised grazing fees. Graziers resented the increased taxation and accompanying harassment and in 1920 all graziers were ordered out, some reportedly forcibly evicted and their houses burnt down (Bhandari 1986: 44-48). The mobilisation of resistance through this period was only institutionalised in 1933 with the formation of the Tezpur Graziers' Association. The oldest Nepali association in Assam, it was formed to help resettle Nepali graziers, especially those evicted from Kaziranga, but its aims included involving Assamese Nepalis in the freedom movement and promoting harmony between the Assamese and Nepali communities (Bhandari 1986: 88). These goals were consistent with the career of its President, Chhivilāl Upādhyāya. One of the most well known Nepali political leaders of the north-east, Upādhyāya (1882-1980) had started his career within Assam's principal political body, the Assam Association. He was elected chair for a special convention of the association held in Jorhat in 1921;<sup>250</sup> this session also saw the organisation change its name to the Assam Provincial Congress Committee and endorse the non-cooperation movement (Śarmā 1981: 74-75). Through publicity work on behalf of the Committee he was responsible for recruiting family members and others from the Assam Nepali community. When Mahatma Gandhi visited Tezpur on 30 June 1921 at the end of an Assam tour, Upādhyāya was picked up by a British police officer and offered inducements to cease his political activities. According to Śarmā (1981: 76) the police officer asked him why he felt the need to oppose British rule when Nepal was an independent nation, to which he replied:

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<sup>250</sup> Rāī's date of 17 April 1921 (1992: 45; also supported by Bhandari 1996: 53) appears more likely than Śarmā's claim of 1920.

I was born in Assam and it will be in Assam that I die. Nepal may be an independent country (*svādhīn rājya*) but I have not seen Nepal. Where I was born, that is my birthland. Nepal may be my fatherland by virtue of my ancestors once having resided there but I have no current connection with that country. For that reason I know only about my motherland. The movement of this country is also my movement. I cannot quit the Congress. And for this I am fully ready to face whatever circumstances my fellow countrymen have to face.<sup>251</sup>

Later in the same year Chhaviḷāl was imprisoned in Tezpur for forming a Svayamsevak Dal; his elder brother Hariprasād was also jailed for three months (Bhandari 1986: 55). Congress politics and the Non-Cooperation movement drew in many Nepali activists from Darjeeling. Bhagat Bīr Tāmāñ was arrested several times and became the first Nepali freedom movement martyr when he died in Darjeeling District Jail in January 1924. Dal Bahādur Girī became the most prominent local leader; a veteran of the 1918 Congress conference in Delhi, he was arrested for anti-government activity in January 1921. His death at Kalimpong in November 1924, following quickly on Tāmāñ's, left a gap in the Darjeeling leadership.<sup>252</sup> His protégé Pratimāñ Siṃh Lāmā (whose writing we have encountered in 3.2.2) had been confined to Kurseong after organising a meeting to protest Gandhi's arrest in 1922. Also of Kurseong, Sāvitrī Devī (the name given her by Gandhi) was the most prominent Nepali woman freedom fighter. She lived in Anand Bhavan for some time and was active in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar; reportedly close to both Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, she assisted in the latter's escape from Kurseong to Germany via Kabul. Imprisoned for three months in Darjeeling in 1922, she too was confined to Kurseong for three years (Bhandari 1986: 59-60). Beyond the period covered by this thesis there was also a significant Nepali contribution to the Indian National Army of Subhash Chandra Bose.<sup>253</sup>

However, it was in Dehradun that the Nepali public sphere was to experience the most radical combination of discursive and political functions, as well as the linking of specifically Nepali political concerns to the Indian freedom movement. The history of

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<sup>251</sup> Rāi (1992: 48) reports the same conversation with a slight variation in the exact words (neither he nor Sarmā cites any source), adding that when Gandhi heard of Chhaviḷāl's actions he said 'Well done'. Bhandari (1996: 54) also recounts this tale, attributing it to Viṣṇulāl Upādhyāya's Assamese language biography of Chhaviḷāl.

<sup>252</sup> Gandhi wrote a brief obituary in *Young India*, 13 November (Bhandari 1986: 58).

<sup>253</sup> M.P. Rāi (1992) offers an invaluable collection of short biographies of Nepalis involved in the Indian independence movement.

Nepali organisation here dates to at least 1915, when the Gorkha Association was founded.<sup>254</sup> By the 1930s activists from this area were prominent in the civil disobedience movement;<sup>255</sup> their political awakening owed much to the dramatic development of the All-India Gorkha League, an organisation established in February 1924 in Dehradun by a remarkable individual, Ṭhākur Chandan Siṃh (see Appendix 3). Siṃh united the roles of publisher and political leader through the programme of the AIGL and the publication of two important Nepali journals, *Gorkhā Saṃsār* (1926-1929) and *Taruṅ Gorkhā* (1928-1933), as well as the English weeklies *Himalayan Times* and *Himalayan Review*. With a background in Congress activism (Jawaharlal Nehru visited his home when in Dehradun in April 1922) and the Hindū Mahasabhā (of whose Dehradun Branch he was elected President in 1921), he gradually transferred his energies to Nepali projects. Already in 1921 he had set up the All-India Ex-Gorkha Soldiers Association; following the establishment of the AIGL he laid the basis for his journalistic work by purchasing the Grand Himalayan Press.<sup>256</sup> The geographical extent of the AIGL and the consequent reach of its publications was unprecedented: within three years branch offices had sprung up not only across north India but even in Bhutan, Burma and Fiji (Lama 1997: 35). Siṃh's journals furthered the discussion of *unnati*-related social topics while incorporating them within an explicitly political framework which allied the advancement of the Nepali *jāti* with the wider freedom movement. Here, for a period of less than a decade, the Nepali public sphere experienced its most directly political transformation at the same time as it achieved its widest geographical coverage. Yet this was a transitory phenomenon: when

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<sup>254</sup> After independence this became the Punjab Gorkha Association and in 1966 the Himachal Pradesh and Punjab Gorkha Association (Timsina 1992: 20).

<sup>255</sup> Bhandari (1986: 78-79) lists thirty-nine Nepalis from Dehradun who were active in the civil disobedience movement of 1930. In the Dandi March of March-April 1930, two of Gandhi's seventy-nine followers were Indian Nepalis: Khaḍga Bahādur Biṣṭa of Dehradun and Māhavīr Girī of Darjeeling. Biṣṭa returned to Dehradun and gathered forty-three followers for the subsequent march on the Dharsana salt depot but they were arrested and jailed for three months. Altogether some two hundred people from Dehradun were imprisoned during the Salt Satyagraha. At the request of Motilal Nehru, Biṣṭa also recruited young Nepalis to Congress; he and a group of some sixty-five youths were arrested during picketing in Delhi in October 1930 (*ibid.*: 82, 84). British recruiting officers' preference for Nepalese youths over locally-raised Indian Nepalis apparently caused dissatisfaction. Apart from Bhandari's work, Nepal and the Indian nationalist movement has been the subject of one more useful book-length study (Mojumdar 1975).

<sup>256</sup> Siṃh's life and work (including some analysis of the content of his newspapers) are the subject of Lama (1997); see also Appendix 3.

Siṃh stopped publishing in 1933 the AIGL was deprived of its discursive lifeblood and soon withered. It was only in 1943 that a revival by Ḍambar Siṃh Guruṅ in Darjeeling resurrected the potential of an engaged and all-encompassing Nepali political sphere.

#### 4.4. Constituting the public: the composition of civil society

##### 4.4.1. Participation in the public realm

Active participation in Nepali civil society was not necessarily open to all those who might think of themselves as Nepali. The flagship projects of the civic-minded—such as library projects or the establishment of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan—could best be supported by those who could contribute intellectually or financially: while the poor and destitute were to benefit from the Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan, it was largely the great and good who managed it. On the other hand, being Nepali was not a necessary criterion for participation in social and cultural projects. As we have seen, the Banaras-based proprietor of *Chandra*, Mādho Prasād, was a Bihari but played an important role in developing Nepali journalism by dint of his capital and press; the Kurseong Gorkha Library emerged from an initiative inspired by the Lepcha J. Pāval; Laden La, the Bhutia Deputy Superintendent of Police in Darjeeling who died in 1936, was actively courted for association with prominent Nepali projects despite his steadfast opposition to key demands such as the introduction of Nepali as an educational medium in public schools.<sup>257</sup> Those who constituted Nepali civil society often represented different interest or privilege groups. While non-Nepalis—such as Laden La, the Bhutanese royalty, or British administrators—could influence institutions through patronage, establishment figures from within the Nepali community reflected the values of their immediate environment: Banaras-based projects could count on the support of flocks of *paṇḍits*, Kathmandu activities might draw in

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<sup>257</sup> Thus, for example, the Himalaya and Children Amusement Association was established under the chairmanship of Laden La. In the build-up to the approval of Nepali as a primary school vernacular in 1935, Laden La was persuaded to tone down his strident public opposition to the campaign during a meeting at the house of Sardār Bahādur Lt. Govardhan Guruṅ (Pradhān 1991: 194-97). It is perhaps significant that the powerful D.S.P. was talked round by the only local Nepali able to pull rank on him: on his retirement from the army Guruṅ had been appointed aide-de-camp to the Governor-General of Bengal. Just before this, Laden La had summoned Pārasmaṅi to his house to account for what he had interpreted as personal insults in Pārasmaṅi's speech to the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan (Pradhān 1991: 191-93; the speech was Pradhān 1934).

educated Brāhmaṇs, members of the Rāṇā clans or government officers, and Darjeeling could look to retired army or police officers, contractors and entrepreneurs, and the growing class of those who held formal British educational qualifications and positions in government service.

Evidence of patterns of involvement in social and cultural affairs is readily available in journals, not least in the frequent public notices and reports on efforts to establish schools and libraries and the lists of donors who are regularly thanked for their contributions. For example, *Chandrikā* started publication as the campaign to raise funds for the Gorkha Library in Kurseong was underway. The earliest notices of gratitude for financial assistance illustrate the geographical and social reach of appeals to civic solidarity.<sup>258</sup> There are further indications from time to time of the readership of *Chandrikā* itself. Similar evidence is available from the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan and its records. Just over a decade later its Executive Committee (in a meeting on 16 August 1931) agreed that the Sammelan must aim to sign up one hundred new members that year and must encourage all members to help with recruitment. Minutes record the individuals to whom responsibility for specific areas was assigned; this gives some indication of the spread of active members of the Sammelan. Likewise, records of membership of the Sammelan provide evidence of a wide range of ethnic origin, and also a degree of geographical distribution around the district of Darjeeling and beyond (*Figure 4-2*). Appendix 2 gives sample membership information on various literary-print communities in Banaras and Darjeeling which illustrates changing patterns of participation.

<sup>258</sup> Mukhadās Lāmā of Chemṅmārī in Bhutan (cf. Hutt 2003) made a large donation of Rs 15; he is accorded the honorific titles of both 'Śrīyukta' and 'Bābu'. His donation is followed by that of another Buddhist: Dhokal Siṅg Lāmā, described as a contractor, gives Rs 10. Other donors—apart from a Bābu Akal Siṅg Lāmā who could afford Rs 5—also have their status specifically indicated (often to the exclusion of their *thar* or caste/ethnic name). Thus Jitmān Sardār contributed five rupees; donations of three rupees each were received from Dhanarāj Sardār, Ambar Siṅg Dāhāl Sardār (of Jaihāu in Bhutan), Kāilā and Māilā Sardār. Other occupational ranks included the *maṅḍals* Agam Siṅg and Syāmlāl, the *munsī* Parbal Siṅg Lāmā, Rāi Chaprāsī and the other *chaprāsīs* Man Bahādur Ghale and Kānchhā Bhujel. In line with their lower job status these latter contributed only one rupee each: the hierarchy of civil participation neatly follows that of occupation. Appropriately, the largest single contributor recorded in this notice was Mr George 'Mahābart'—presumably a European although the confusingly transliterated surname is unhelpful—who made available 120 rupees' worth of wood (C1(1): 19). One month later further donations were received via Śrīyukta Dāmachhyoī Lāmā of Maṭeli. Bābu Narbīr Munsī of Chhemṅmārī Kamān gave Rs 15, Bābu Buddhimān Rāi of Sakyomṅ Baratī, Pedomṅ, Rs 5, and Bābu Dilmān Sardār of Mahābārī Bastī, Chālasā, Rs 5 (C1(2): 26).

## नेपाली साहित्य सम्मेलनका सदस्यहरूको नामावली ।

## धसयी सदस्य :—

१। श्री हरि प्रसाद प्रधान	६। श्री मो० जे० दुनेल
२। श्री क० बी० बस्नेत त्रेत्री	७। रमेश्वर कालुसिंह पीटसं
३। .. रामवर्ण थापा	८। सदाँर बहादुर जंगवीर लामा
४। .. आर० गुरु० भारती	९। श्री पारसमणि प्रधान
५। .. सुबेदार मेजर तमलाल राई	१०। सदाँर बहादुर हनजिन देवान राई
	११। श्री लक्ष्मीनारायण सुखानी
	१२। .. मेजर मन० जंग गथा

## साधारण सदस्य :—

१३। श्री पद्मप्रसाद प्रधान	३५। श्री पासाङ्ग लामा
१४। डाक्टर मदन थापा	३६। .. महानन्द गिरि
१५। श्री पद्म बहादुर सिंह	३७। .. देना लामा
१६। .. हस्तलाल गिरि	३८। .. खड्गबहादुर सिंह
१७। .. शृंगबहादुर गुरुङ्ग	३९। .. हृषीकेश लामा
१८। .. जगन् सिंह लामा	४०। .. भनवीर सुखिया
१९। .. जंगवीर सिंह काकी	४१। .. जोगधन राई
२०। .. हरिसिंह थापा	४२। .. अगम सिंह राई
२१। .. रेशमी प्रसाद आले	४३। .. जंगवीर सुखिया
२२। .. धरणीधर शर्मा	४४। .. मींगमार डपानडुब
२३। .. सूर्य विक्रम झवाली	४५। .. सुरवीर थापा
२४। .. मोतीचन्द्र प्रधान	४६। .. गणेश राई
२५। .. हर्कमान राई	४७। .. बुद्धिमान राई
२६। .. हरिप्रसाद ब्राह्मण	४८। .. बहादुर ऐत्री
२७। .. साकी लामा	४९। .. हुम्बे छिरीङ्ग
२८। .. गर्जमान देवान	५०। .. मान बहादुर थापा
२९। .. रामचन्द्र गिरि	५१। .. मानबहादुर गुरुङ्ग
३०। .. निमा नोबू लामा	५२। .. भनसिंह ऐत्री
३१। .. रूपनारायण सिंह	५३। .. दिव्यलाल प्रधान
३२। डाक्टर बी० आर० शर्मा	५४। .. देवी दयाल सुखानी
३३। श्री कविराज दीननाथ स्वापकोट	५५। .. कालु लामा
३४। श्रीमती चन्द्रकुमारी देवी	

मुद्रक—श्री शंकराणि प्रधान, मणि ह्यापाखाना, कानिम्पोङ्ग ।  
प्रकाशक श्री पद्मप्रसाद प्रधान, नेपाली साहित्य सम्मेलन, राजीसिङ्ग

Figure 4-2 The list of members of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan provided on the back cover of the *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā* 4(1).

Material such as this can also contribute to extending the analysis of readership introduced in 2.2. Here we can make some observations on the situation in Darjeeling, although it is easier to gauge the size and extent of readership than the nature of its composition. In Darjeeling there is only limited evidence of sales and tastes and the most useful available statistical information dates from 1931. In this year the first *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā* (1: 3) gives sales figures for four books under the general title of 'Jñāna Pustakamālā' published by the NSS which indicate that by the late 1920s a Nepali readership had been established which was sufficiently sizeable and well off to support the publication of a certain number of literary works at both the populist and more highbrow

ends of the spectrum.<sup>259</sup> We may also extrapolate from the success of textbook sales and other sources of information on the expansion of education that the number of literate Nepali readers was increasing. There was also a growing awareness of the need for institutions to reach out to these readers through publicity.<sup>260</sup>

The range of projects which called for the involvement of an emergent civil society have been examined in the preceding sections. The growth of voluntary participation in various charitable, cultural and political undertakings brought certain individuals and groups a social prominence that they might otherwise never have enjoyed. For as well as drawing on traditional patronage networks, social projects offered benefits to two significant classes of people: providing the opportunity of respectable donations, they enabled the newly rich to buy added social legitimation and prestige through public financial support; and requiring educated, literate leadership they provided further outlets for those who dominated print discourse to wield a different sort of influence in public life. Yet just as a dominant mainstream of rhetoric threatened to drown out peripheral or rival voices, so there were actors in public life who did not conform to the primary aims of the 'social progress' project. Thus developments in Nepali identity and community were also being paralleled by less well remembered progress in the creation of a modern sense of Newar identity. Most prominent in this movement were perhaps Mādhav Rāj Joṣī and his son Śukrarāj Śāstrī, both of whom founded their work on religious reform (see Appendix 3).

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<sup>259</sup> One thousand copies of each had been printed. Of these, *Man laharī* sold out, *Naivedya* sold 619 copies, *Vadhuśikṣā* 691 copies, and *Kavi bhānubhaktako Jīvan charitra* 759 copies. Meanwhile of three textbooks published, *Nepālī sāhitya kathāmālā* sold out; *Nepālī hasta lekḥ* Part 1 sold 1571 copies and Part 2 1644 copies. Given access to printers' and publishers' records, more work could be done on evaluating the quantity of sales of other works and their patterns of distribution and consumption. In this context it should be observed that the NSS's accounts were in the black by 34 rupees (*NSSP* 1: 3). This had been achieved despite the remainders of print runs and the Sammelaṅ's failure to recruit a large number of fee-paying members.

<sup>260</sup> Thus the NSS recognised (*NSSP* 1: 15) that it needed to bring out a journal to keep its members informed of activities: 'As members are completely unaware of the state of work being undertaken by the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelaṅ, this small journal has been published so that the Sammelaṅ can give its members full information about work it has done. Here there will be a full description of the main tasks carried out by the Sammelaṅ every three months. This will be distributed to members free of cost. In the space left after printing reports on the Sammelaṅ's work literary prose or poetic compositions will be printed from time to time.'

#### 4.4.2. Education, elitism and exclusion

As the introduction made clear, the primary problem that the Nepali public sphere poses as a model for social and cultural analysis is its limited representativeness. In its early stages it encompassed a small number of people (both in absolute and relative terms) and allowed actors from a limited set of social and educational backgrounds disproportionate influence in defining a community and its agenda for development. This potential narrowness of focus is a problem inherent to the interpretation of print-based culture in this period. However, the patterns and dynamics of exclusion on the basis of education or elitist considerations are not entirely predictable and a study of their workings can be revealing. Onta rightly argues (1996a: 67) that the work of Sūryavikram, Dharaṅīdhar, Pārasmaṅi and others should be viewed within the local agenda of Darjeeling as a deliberate attempt to distance the educated from the illiterate working classes:

Their efforts at cultural production through the use of the Nepali language can be interpreted as a project of differentiation whereby a proto-middle class, deploying its educational and cultural capital, separated itself from the larger Nepali coolie population of the Darjeeling area. The confidence of this class...was acquired through educational achievements within the formal academy. Hence the arguments of self-improvement espoused by this group revolved so centrally around the spread of education amongst the Nepali population in Darjeeling and beyond.

However, Onta's 'project of differentiation' cannot explain the determined mobilisation behind the Nepali language. At the very least, the differentiation must have been also from the middle classes of other cultural spheres: were this not the case, these activists and their peers could have easily found their place in existing elites, be it of Brāhmaṅs or among their fellow graduates from Hindi, Bengali or English medium schools. Onta's fundamental contention that these activists could deploy a new kind of 'capital' and that this set them apart from their uneducated fellows is incontrovertible. Yet the dogged pursuit of status for Nepali and the promotion of its pedagogical potential indicate a more subtle relationship between high and low cultures.

At its simplest, the attitude of language activists was downright contradictory: their stated concerns—as expressed in editorial after editorial, essay after essay—were with society as a whole and yet their medium and message often reinforced a position of detached exclusivity. Initially, language forms a useful prism through which to examine this issue. As the novelty of *mātr̥bhāṣā* as a concept (3.3) has already indicated, in the early

twentieth century the major markers in a debate on linguistic status were still fluid, at least in terms of their popular understanding and adoption. This was even more the case with the Nepali language itself. Efforts towards its standardisation are discussed in the next chapter (5.2.2); here we may note that rigid models of aesthetics inherited from Sanskrit literature were not balanced by grammatical or orthographic precision in the use of Nepali. One major, long-running confrontation over Nepali usage was that between Pārasmaṇi and Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān. Pārasmaṇi saw Gaṅgāprasād's language as ungrammatical and ungainly while Gaṅgāprasād in return criticised *Chandrikā*'s register as being an unintelligibly elitist 'Kashi' dialect (5.2.2). Beyond the clash of personalities which enlivened this debate, Gaṅgāprasād's criticism served a serious warning that *Chandrikā* would alienate itself from many readers through its impenetrable style.

This interpretation received support from the most unexpected quarter: from a woman writing within the pages of *Chandrikā* itself. The self-deprecating language in which the analysis offered by Śrīmatī Kumudīnī of the Kalimpong Women's College is couched cannot conceal the boldness of her direct challenge to the assumptions of the journal's (all male) editor and writers. Her thesis is blunt: there has been a distinct lack of *unnati* in language as a result of the failure of papers and journals. Moreover, the gap between written and spoken language has led to the development of a prose style that is wholly inappropriate for a wider audience. She is willing (1918: 11) to accept the need for standards: 'The pure speech of a language is dependent on grammar. Without a knowledge of grammar it is impossible to speak correctly, this much is evident.' Yet she is a realist, going on to point out (*ibid.*: 12) that each *jāti* within the Nepali *jāti* (itself an interesting conceptualisation) has its own language and that most Nepalis are uneducated:

They have not the least knowledge of correct and incorrect usage of language. Yet the while the language of these peasants and workers may not be pure it is natural, flowing and full of expression (*rasayukta*) ... No one says 'I am undertaking a journey for the purpose of observation of the market' (*ma bajār avalokanārtha gaman garchhū*) instead of 'I am going to look round the market'.

Her praise for the 'natural', unpretentious vernacular of working people is effectively underlined by her amusing lampooning of those who would translate even the simplest of everyday sentences into a dense mass of Sanskritic verbiage. Indeed, her choice of example may be evidence of even more specific satirical target: the pompous-sounding

*avalokanārtha* was used just a few months previously by Pārasmaṇi in his editorial about the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat* (C1(2): 24; discussed below).<sup>261</sup> And as it was this editorial that had responded to the accusation of *Chandrikā*'s language being '*kāśī bhāṣe bolī*' the aptness of turning this word back into an attack on stylistic obscurantism is beyond doubt. However, hers is not an explicitly *ad hominem* attack: she places the blame for sluggish progress on journalism as a whole (1918: 12):

Our greatest duty is to give language the support of *unnati* (*bhāṣālāi unnatiko ṭevā dinu*). In many places one can hear even parrots and minas repeating that the development of language depends upon grammar and journals but there is no sign of language beating the drum of *unnati* at home or abroad. Why has the Nepali *jāti* not been able to bring about *unnati* of its language?

Although careful to qualify her own competence to provide an answer by emphasising her feminine weakness—'to give a realistic answer to this is beyond the powers of a slow-witted woman such as myself'—she does not shrink from launching a direct assault on the role of journals. She notes other factors such as the dominance of English and the way in which its perception as the sole fount for modern knowledge can breed contempt for other mother tongues. Yet it is the gap between journals' lofty claims for their potential and their demonstrable lack of achievement that forms the primary target for her harsh assessment (*ibid.*):

While repeatedly expressing the hope that journals will make language flourish, many journals have had to hide their faces. The reason for this has already been expressed in many forms by many educated members of society but I see a great difference between the opinions of those educated members of society (*tī śikṣit samājkā bhanāi*) and what I have to say. In my humble opinion, the main reason for this is the form of [written] language being different from ordinary speech (*bolī chālīko rupsaṅga vibhinna*). The language in journals would generally be very difficult. Many people would not be able to understand the full meaning of the language of those journals. Of course it may be that to use difficult sentences among our half-educated people is like reading the *purāṇas* to bears. If one does

<sup>261</sup> Again, this stands in contrast to later praise for Pārasmaṇi's style, exemplified by Pradhan (1997: 16-17): 'His editorials were written in a simple style and language so that anyone who could read Nepali found no problem in understanding him'. However, the tendency to overuse Sanskrit vocabulary was sharply noted by at least one learned contemporary critic. Ralph Lilley Turner, author of the ambitious *Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* (1931; in which project he was helped by Gaṅgāprasād and especially by Dharaṇīdhar), concluded his review of Pārasmaṇi and Śeṣ Maṇi's *Nepālī sāhitya (part 4)* and *Nepālī vyākaraṇ* (1928) with the following plea (1928: 155): 'Finally, let me make an appeal: that those who are trying to form Nepali as a modern literary language, should not imitate Bengali by quite unnecessarily replacing good native words with importations from Sanskrit'. Their grammar is also criticised (*ibid.*: 154) as 'it suffers from the defect of so many modern Indo-Aryan text-books of grammar: a slavish adherence to the form and terminology of Sanskrit Grammar'.

not understand the meaning of the language then however much an article is steeped in the sentiment and sense of knowledge (*kastai jñān rupi ras tathā bhāṅve yukta bhayeko lekh bhaye panī*) one will gain not the least pleasure from it nor will one's attention be drawn to the language again. This is also the reason that the majority of people have not developed a taste (*abhiruchī na gareko*) for reading journals.

The argument of Śrīmatī Kumudinī is in stark contrast to most analyses of the reasons for the limited Nepali readership (as presented in 2.2). It stands apart for one simple but crucial reason: she allocates responsibility—and consequently blame for failure—to publishers and writers rather than the general public. Almost all other writers tended to assume that the virtues of high-minded literary endeavour required no explanation: rather it was the unresponsive market that deserved castigation for its lack of support and appreciation of the selfless efforts of their small band of peers.<sup>262</sup> Śrīmatī Kumudinī is radical in her willingness to turn the tables and offer the opposite analysis: it is not readers that have let down writers but journals that have failed to cater for their potential readership. She does not abandon the ideal of journals leading the way in cultural advancement but concludes (*ibid.*:13) with an unambiguous challenge to *Chandrikā* to change its ways or face failure in its wider ambitions.

In order to make its contents more engaging (*rasamayī*) any periodical should first of all make its language extremely straightforward (*atyanta sahal*). By gradually increasing the complexity of language everyone will gradually understand its sense... In the future it is by the respectful adoption of simple language that *Chandrikā* must make the effort to increase its glory day by day.<sup>263</sup> Only if the learned writers of *Chandrikā* pay particular attention to simplicity is there any possibility of language making any progress.

Śrīmatī Kumudinī's brief essay is one of the most remarkable—and least celebrated—contributions to *Chandrikā*.<sup>264</sup> It was original and bold: perhaps her *de facto* exclusion as a woman made it easier for her to look on the clique of highbrow writers from the outside and

<sup>262</sup> Śrīmatī Kumudinī was not the sole critical voice. In the opening issue of *Chandrikā* Mīn Bahādur Bhaṭṭa (1918: 12) had pointed out that fine writing was not inherently a good thing: 'Nowadays many poets in making their poetry (*kavitā gardā*) or penning prose imagine their principal duty to be fill their captivating, ornamented 'work' (*manohāriṇī śṛṅgārabhūṣitā 'lekh'*) with a jungle of pedantry (*pāṇḍitya jhādī*); they have not spared any black ink in dousing their poor, clean paper. Is our language about to enter the highest class through increasing the honour of writing in this way?'

<sup>263</sup> 'Increase its glory' translates 'āphno kalā pratidin baḍhāune' in which the punning *kalā* could also stand for 'art' or 'issues': in its meaning of 'moonbeam' it is the name given to each issue of *Chandrikā* (which itself means 'moon').

<sup>264</sup> For example, she is not referred to in Kamal Dīkṣit's survey of women contributors to early journals (1979/80: 1-7), and she is only mentioned in one sentence by Dayāratna Śā. Bhi. (1982: 28) as being, alongside Śeṣ Maṇi, foremost among Kalimpong contributors to *Chandrikā*.

to empathise with less educated society. It was critical yet positive: her satire could clearly be sharp but she used it to highlight practical suggestions for improvement rather than simply to prick others' pomposity. She was able to make a business and an aesthetic argument: her analysis recognised the need for marketing but did not seek the lowest common denominator for purely commercial success. This approach bridges the gap between the profitable but tawdry *laharī* literature and high-minded but narrow-based efforts to promote language improvement. Yet most importantly, she may well have been right. Whatever its successes, *Chandrikā*—like its predecessors and successors—ultimately failed to make itself a viable periodical despite the existence of a growing and lively market. The clearest explanation of this failure may have come not in its closing editorials but in the words of an unknown woman writer who saw that the qualities that fuelled its self-satisfied editorials were in fact the seeds of its inevitable demise.

Pratimān Siṃh Lāmā picked up on the themes identified by Śrīmatī Kumudinī in the next issue of *Chandrikā*. In fact, he was writing directly in response to the comments of another woman, Vasundharā Devī, his predecessor in stewardship of the 'Prašnottar' (question and answer) column. She had expressed amazement that not one answer had been received to the question posed by Bhīmdal Dewān in the first issue. Prefiguring one part of Śrīmatī Kumudinī's case she had exclaimed (1918: 18), 'If this is the case then how on earth can there be progress in society! Where is the benefit in bringing out journals?' Of course, she was lambasting the readership (implying that pearls were being cast before swine) rather than questioning the role of the journal itself. However, Lāmā (1918b: 20) was prompted to think the issue through and question the assumed importance of journals and the breadth of their reach:

At this time it is a mistake to imagine that our society will achieve *unnati* just by our bringing out journals and writing essays and poetry because these journals fall into the hands of only a few learned people. These learned people will each have read such essays and so forth in their student days. To claim that journals such as these cause 'language' to flourish and announce the civilisation of society is mere words: they cannot have such an impact on society. Yet it is not my intention to say that such journals are of no benefit and so there is no need to publish them. Until thousands of such journals are published no society at all can reach the peak of *unnati*. But the effort to which we must devote all our energies is to use the influence of journals to have the people educated by establishing a range of educational organisations in every village and town. This is the main duty of journals, this is their main purpose.

Thus more than one contributor to *Chandrikā* highlighted the limited range of its readership. From this we may already ask questions as to the openness of the public sphere it was helping to shape. Yet there remain further patterns of exclusiveness and exclusion which must inform our understanding of participation in public culture. We have seen how *Chandrikā*'s readers were criticised for their lack of participation, be it in terms of puzzle answers or *samasyāpūrti* poetry competitions. However, those willing to contribute had to be certain of their mastery of their chosen medium or be willing to face ridicule and public humiliation.

For there was harsh criticism of those who didn't meet exacting aesthetic standards, especially poor poets. Exclusion would be possible on the basis of taste and education: the implication being that amateurs need only apply if they were gifted or very thick-skinned. Following the announcement of a bereavement (C1(11): 23) comes an article whose pervasive sarcasm has even infected its headline: 'New Nepali poet in Ghūmphāḥḍ': 'moved by the sense of loss at the above-mentioned death the esteemed Mr. M. B. Chetry, Late gaurd [sic], D.H. Ry., Ghoom,<sup>265</sup> has gone to the trouble of composing the following *śloka* and having it published in Darjeeling's famous monthly newspaper, the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*.' A predictably undistinguished poem is then reproduced as justification for Pārasmaṇi's sharp invective (*ibid.*: 24):

Congratulations, respected poet! By completely dishonouring the prosodic rulebooks for the *śrutabodha* and *chhandamañjarī* metres in your composition of the above-mentioned poem you have earned great glory in your attempt to propagate a new system of metrics in Nepali society!! Alas!!! When someone wonders what sort of beast is 'poetry', has not the least idea of how poetry is made and such matters, why should such a person desire to write poetry? Your poem is neither formed according to the rules nor is that poem's positioning of words correct. Your poem is incorrect from the very beginning to the very end.

And what sort of excuse for an editor is the editor who wished to stretch the limits of his paper by giving space to such an incorrect, meaningless poem! Chhṛī !! How shameful!!!'

Pārasmaṇi's sneering humiliation of Mr Chetry must owe something to his desire to exploit this as one further opportunity to ridicule Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān and his lack of editorial skills, as well as perhaps disdain for the idea of a railway guard turning his hand to poetry. Here he displays at least a serious dose of youthful arrogance: while Pārasmaṇi had

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<sup>265</sup> The name and address were presented in English, possibly mirroring their presentation in the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*.

yet to complete one year at the helm of *Chandrikā*, Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān's *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat* was approaching the end of its second decade of continuous publication. Yet the brutal attack on a naive amateur must have made other lowly would-be poets think twice about submitting work for publication.

For Pārasmaṇi did not spare writers in his own journal either. The poem 'Avanati-paṃchak' by Vajināth Sedhāim (1918) may well be uninspired doggerel. Yet this is only made more obvious by the insertion of several editorial question marks in brackets after dubious efforts to overcome metric problems by lengthening and shortening vowels. Harsh treatment for a diligent servant of Nepali writing and publishing (see fn. 167 and Appendix 3). Similarly, Sūrya Prasād Śarmā Pauḍyāl's 'Prārthanā' is sadly distinguished only for the cutting editorial footnote that accompanies it (C2(1): 29): 'Although this poem contains many faults it has been given space because it is laudatory verse. In future would the esteemed poet please not take the trouble to send in such poetry—Editor.' Even Pārasmaṇi's most faithful contributor, Tārānāth Śarmā, had to suffer public rebuke, with his poem 'Nidāgh's (1919c) inconsistent deployment of *hrasva* and *dīrgha* (long and short) vowels inspiring yet another critical editorial footnote:

As time has gone by so has there come about great progress in our language. Earlier there was no grammar in the language and so poets could place whatsoever words wheresoever they fancied without any thought for short and long vowels. But now that grammars have come out in the vernacular, whether writing verse or prose it is better to write on the basis of a grammar. Falling under the power of metre and writing a single type of word differently in different places will not do. In such a situation the poet should make a correct verse even at the cost of some effort.

Quite how writers reacted to such patronising editorial high-handedness is hard to judge in the absence of relevant memoirs or personal correspondence.<sup>266</sup> The public

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<sup>266</sup> In retrospect, Pārasmaṇi's fastidious approach to poetics and schoolmasterly criticisms are entirely consistent with his subsequent career as a teacher and inspector of schools. Indeed, Pārasmaṇi's pedantry had manifested itself from an earlier stage. Following his essay 'Vidyā' (1915b: 18) is a note he has sent correcting the three typographical errors which found their way into an English quotation in his previous essay ('Adhyavasāy', 1915a). Despite the frequency of such errors in all early journals I have not come across another instance of an author making corrections in this way.

The frank personal recollections of Pārasmaṇi's family affairs by his son Indramani are surely also relevant to his public persona. Towards his children, he is described (Pradhan 1997: 101) as 'strict, sometimes to the point of being harsh', and perhaps even more so towards daughters-in-law. Indramani remembers him (*ibid.*: 105) as always serious and prone to hectoring his twelve children in a way that recalls his attitude towards the underperforming poets of *Chandrikā*: 'Often he said things to make us angry and to hurt our pride in order to shake us up to do something, for he believed that

message conveyed to the readership as a whole is, however, consistent. The combination of didactic editorials and brutal criticism of inadequate literary efforts serve to reinforce a sense of the editor as unquestionable arbiter of taste and correctness and as gatekeeper to an exclusive public realm.<sup>267</sup> Indeed, the criteria for acceptability of creative writing might suggest that the literary public sphere represented more of a promulgatory than a participatory model, acting as a showcase for display of the editorially sanctioned while warning off unprepared would-be contributors.

#### 4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has moved across a range of areas and analytical approaches in order to sketch the extent and limitations of the public sphere as it was incorporated in institutions. The purpose of this exercise has been to address perhaps the most fundamental problematic underlying this thesis: that of the influence and representativeness of the public sphere and, consequentially, of its wider value as a social-historical conceptualisation. The earlier sections demonstrated that ideas expressed in a fairly narrowly delimited print media were

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often an irritant was necessary to get the human machinery to move forward, and make a success of life. In our presence he was always like a drill sergeant in the presence of his troop and the troop would always be alert and at attention in his presence.’ A further personal recollection is that of Badrī Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (1996: 70), a distant relative who addressed Pārasmaṇi as ‘uncle’: ‘He would call me ‘Badrī’ as if I were his own son, and address me with [the most intimate second person pronoun] ‘tam’. Sometimes he would also scold me as a father or uncle would. Sometimes this upset me. For days on end I would sulk and not even go to his house in Kalimpong.’

Three decades later, Pārasmaṇi (commenting, as editor of *Bhāratī*, on entries to a poetry competition) was still offering similar advice to would-be poets but had slightly tempered the harshness of his language (Pradhān 1991: 276): ‘The other entries have not been printed as they were considered incorrect (*asuddha*). But there is no reason for novice poets to despair. They must try to send the answers to another riddle in correct verse.’

<sup>267</sup> Such sentiments were not limited to the editor himself. ‘Ek Śeṣ’ (1918, possibly Śeṣ Maṇi, but identified by Dayāratna Śā. Bhi. (1982: 28) as a pseudonym for another, unnamed, Kalimpong writer) also contributed an article entitled ‘Be steadfast, O spirit, be steadfast!’. This brief essay takes the form of an address to one’s spirit urging it not to overreach itself. It cautions against trying to earn a name writing poetry when one does not understand metre and cannot even write good prose (alongside many other weaknesses). It could be read as an elaborate continuation of the attack on MB Chetry with more advice thrown in for good measure. The ‘O spirit!’ formula of repeated invocations to one’s subconscious urges certainly provides a convenient opportunity to censure by implication unnamed writers under the guise of restraining one’s own unhealthy instincts.

Indeed, even Dharaṇīdhar suffered similar treatment in the preface to his own important first collection *Naivedya* (1920a), where Devīprasād Sāpkoṭā concluded his survey of the poems by pointing out that Dharaṇīdhar’s grammar was imperfect, and that he had meddled with spellings and forms to make words fit the metre. This, however, he declares to be permissible, and the poetry praiseworthy for being simple and good for society, natural (*‘svābhāvīk’*) if not grammatically correct.

translated into institutions and paradigms of cultural reproduction and propagation that reached across society. The latter section has been more concerned with social structures and models of authority, a topic which is further examined in the context of the struggle for control over language in 5.2.2. Participation in the Nepali public sphere in India was limited by distinct patterns of exclusion and intertwined strands of elitism conditioned the formation of mainstream discourse. However, these hierarchies reflected changing social realities within the Nepali community rather than just traditional power relations; meanwhile there were a variety of dissenting voices and alternative agendas that also managed to play a part in the formation of public culture.

## Chapter 5

### 'We': self, community, nation and the fashioning of Nepali social consciousness

तेस कारण हामीले पहिले आफ्नो घर, बहाना पछि टोल, बहाना पछि गांउं, बहाना पछि प्रान्त, बहाना पछि आफ्नो देस र जाति कै दुःख निवारण तर्फ ध्यान दिनु उचित छ । जुन देश को हावा पानीले तपाईंको शरीर बनेको छ, जुन देशको मट्टीमा तपाजीको मट्टी मिल्छ, तेस देस संग अवश्य तपाजीको केही घनिष्ट संबन्ध छ । जुन रगत तपाजीमा बगी रहे छ उही रगत अझ तपाजीका स्वातीय हरूमा पनी छ जुन भाषा बोल्नु हुन्छ उही उनीहरु पनी बोल्छन् । जो तपाजीको सुख दुःख छ उही उनीहरुको छ ।

*We should turn our attention to alleviating suffering in our house, after that our ʔol, after that our village, after that our province (prānta), and after that in our country and jāti. Certainly you have some intimate relationship with the country in whose climate your body was formed, with whose earth your mortal body mingles. And the blood which flows within you is also within those of your jāti (svajātiyaharū); the language which you speak they too speak. Your happiness and sorrows are also theirs.*

(Jñavālī 1918: 17-18)

पूरे ब्राह्मण्य धर्ममा हुर्केको र खसकुरा बोल्ने बर्णाश्रमको आदर्शमा जात बाँडिएको जनगोष्ठीमा 'हामी' भन्ने भावना थियो हो, मंगोलीय मूलका, शामानी धर्म मानिआएका र विभिन्न परिमाणमा हिन्दू धर्मको प्रभावमा परेका भोट-बर्मेली भाषा र विभाषाहरु बोल्ने जनगोष्ठीमा त्यो भावनाको प्रबलता किटन अष्टचारो पछि ... यस्ता जातिहरुमा यस्तो भावना आफ्नो गोष्ठीभित्र मात्र सीमित हुन सक्थ्यो ।

*While for those khaskurā-speaking communities divided into castes according to the varṇāśram ideal and brought up in a fully Brahmanic religious tradition there was a feeling of 'we', it is difficult for Mongolian origin, Shamanic faith, Tibeto-Burman language-speaking communities influenced to varying levels by Hinduism to accept the strength of such a feeling ... for such jātis a similar feeling could only have been confined to their own community.*

(Pradhān 1982: 16)

#### 5.1. Interpreting Nepallness

This chapter examines how self-aware social solidarity among Nepalis was developed within the public sphere to produce a feeling of 'we-ness' that could extend beyond traditional caste and community boundaries to encompass diverse groups within the ambit a

single, unified sense of identity. In doing so it examines how Nepali writers in the public arena incorporated and adapted 'alien concepts' (Burghart 1984: 101) or 'norms from outside South Asia' (Gellner 2001: 193) and welded them to indigenous models of social organisation and identification to produce a composite Nepaliess. Historical studies of such processes have tended to focus on the state and top-down approaches to social organisation: where the role of non-state actors has been considered, it has generally been only in the scope of reaction to the strictures of the established regime, be they political, social or religious. While Pradhān (1982) demonstrated the value of a socio-historical approach in tracing Nepali community and identity formation in Darjeeling, it was not until Onta (1996c) that a serious study attempted to link Nepali public culture in India to the subsequent state institutionalisation of a particular nationalist narrative within Nepal. As Chapter 1 has outlined, traditional assessments of Rāṇā-period Nepal, as well as of the origins of modern Nepali culture, have tended towards essentialist solutions in line with nationalistic presumptions.

There have been three broad historical approaches to questions of national and ethnic identity among Nepalis. Standard Panchayat historiography (Onta's 'rāṣṭriya itihās', 1996c) linked the social cohesion of Nepal to its political unification under Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ and his successors, assisted by the propagation of the Nepali language and Hinduism. In its understanding of ethnic and cultural attributes it effectively represents a primordialist standpoint, in which the profound historicity of Nepali group membership, and identification with its symbols, is implicitly assumed. Gorkha expansion merely expanded the geographical reach of the polity within which such membership was ordained to be effective, among peoples whose genetic and ecological background had destined them for association with a single hill, Hindu, identity. A second model, well illustrated by Whelpton (1991), argues that markers of nationalism in South Asia have a greater historicity than usually acknowledged but that instrumental factors were still required to extend and refashion popular cultural consolidation. Thus Whelpton (1991: 24) notes that 'the political process in South Asia is often depicted as one without a concept of nation-state as a source of legitimacy and a focus of loyalty' with the only ideal order the universal model of *varṇāśrama* under a *chakravartin*. However, he suggests that South Asian history also

encompasses something nearer to nationalism in the modern European sense, perhaps particularly evident in the case of Nepal (*ibid.*: 24-25):

The reference by British observers to Maratha national spirit are paralleled by comments on a similar spirit in Nepal. It is in fact arguable that, more than other units in South Asia in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, Nepal was a nation-state in embryo, with a distinct identity rooted in territorial and cultural factors.

Whelpton identifies two specific factors which were present from an early date (*ibid.*: 25): first, 'the political elite's concept of the state which Prithvi Narayan had created as an entity [referred to as *ḍhungā*] to be protected and preserved independently of allegiance to an individual'; second, 'a sense of Parbatiya identity anchored around the Khas ... who had given their name to the language (*khaskura*) spoken by all Parbatiyas ... in particular, solidarity between hill Brahman and Chetri was enhanced by many Chetri lineages claiming Brahman ancestry.' While the position of Newars and Tarai groups was more problematic, all hill peoples, even if not 'Parbatiyas', had (*ibid.*: 26) 'a shared sense of separateness from the plains'. The state was thus able to mould these incipient forms of state allegiance and supra-ethnic solidarity into a more express nationalism. Burghart's much-cited analysis (1984) also falls within this model, in that it recognises both primordial and instrumental factors in the construction of a Nepali concept of nation-state.

A third approach, developed as a revisionist riposte to Panchayat historiography, is exemplified by Pradhan's (1991) sustained attack on what he saw as a nationalist mythology of the Gorkha conquests unifying a primordial nation. Unlike successful nationalist movements, where national feelings were generated by factors such as a common language, culture and shared history (*ibid.*: 154), 'Nepal was neither a nation in being, nor in hope.' Indeed he interprets (*ibid.*: 162) the country's political unification as a catalyst for 'the process of status usurpation by the high order Hindus. The birth of the unified kingdom of Nepal in no way created a unified society. It did not unite the segregated groups brought under it, on the contrary it divided them.' His argument consistently and forcefully rejects the idea of any innate, historic solidarity between the diverse constituent groups of Nepali society. In this respect, it is a logical development from his broadly instrumentalist analysis of Nepali *jāti* formation in Darjeeling (Pradhān 1982). His thesis was published just as the arrival of multi-party democracy in Nepal

prompted an upsurge in ethnic political movements and its reading of Nepali history has been adopted in many of their fundamental tenets.<sup>268</sup>

The investigation of public discourse presented in this chapter serves as a useful antidote to assertions of immutability in Nepali culture, and to models of identity formation which have centred on the state. It demonstrates that the development of a standard, shared sense of social definition emerged from a discursive terrain typified by multiple appellations for languages and peoples, overlapping, coinciding or conflicting conceptualisations of territoriality, statehood and belonging, and an intellectual structuring of society that had to negotiate flexible categories of *jāti* membership. In terms of Nepal studies it applies a previously untried methodology to a category of materials that have been largely overlooked; within the broader field of South Asian studies it offers evidence of how the preoccupations of other cultural spheres, most notably those analysed by Kaviraj (1995), Dalmia (1997) and Orsini (2002), were addressed by a more marginal society. The concern of Nepali writers to relate their community imaginings both to (nominally) uncolonised Nepal, and to a population marked by ethnolinguistic diversity, also provide an interesting counterpoint to the exercises in prototypical nationalist thought within the relatively more homogeneous, and more directly politically involved, Hindi and Bengali spheres. As in Europe, public discussion 'presupposed the problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned' (Habermas 1989: 36).

We have thus far seen that Nepalis were, *de facto* and in spite of their ethnic and linguistic diversity, viewed by outsiders as a distinct grouping and addressed by many Nepali writers as such. Yet consideration of the precise type of community formed by Nepalis immediately throws up complications. Tanka Subba (1992: 37-38) highlights some of the contemporary problems in understanding the relations of the various peoples that can either consider themselves, or be considered by others, to make up the Nepali community in India:

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<sup>268</sup> Cf. the thirteen 'fallacies' or 'myths' propagated by the ruling class over the last 200 years as identified by Krishna B. Bhattachan (cited in Gellner 2001: 192-93), which include 'Inter-caste and ethnic harmony or unity in diversity is a main feature of Nepalese society'; 'Bahuns and Chetris have contributed most in the process of the making of the Nepali State'; 'Nepali language and Hindu religion have been accepted spontaneously by all ethnic groups.'

The ethnic group called 'Nepalis' now is constituted of over nineteen endogamous groups professing different religions, speaking different languages, and holding different positions in the social hierarchy. Some of these groups disdain 'Nepali' identity while others are stripped of such an identity by the Constitution ignoring whether or not they identified themselves with the 'Nepalis'. For instance, the Limbus often assert themselves to be a group apart from the 'Nepalis' ... On the other hand, the Sherpas and Yolmus (or Kagateys) are 'people of Nepali origin' but are Constitutionally treated as 'Bhutias'. Besides there are many Limbus and Mangars in Sikkim who are recognized as 'Nepalis' but are not 'people of Nepali origin'.

Despite their clear heterogeneity in terms of origins and self-identification, Subba chooses to term Nepalis as an 'ethnic group'. This is a definition that he had previously arrived at, concluding elsewhere (1989: 7) that "'Nepali" actually represents an ethnic group irrespective of place of origin and birth or even nationality.' Such interpretations deserve to be investigated in some detail, both for the light they shed on the nature of Nepali identity and for relevance in terms of wider debates about ethnicity. Most writers on ethnicity do not consider it to be a primordial attribute, regardless of the historicity of some ethnicity markers. Hutchinson and Smith (1996: 3) represent a standpoint that avoids primordialism while acknowledging that ethnicity as a phenomenon has long historical roots:

Though the term 'ethnicity' is recent, the sense of kinship, group solidarity, and common culture to which it refers is as old as the historical record. Ethnic communities have been present in every period and continent and have played an important role in all societies. Though their salience and impact have varied considerably, they have always constituted one of the basic modes of human association and community. The same is true of the sense of ethnic identity. Though more elusive, the sense of a common ethnicity has remained to this day a major focus of identification by individuals.

Elsewhere, Smith (1986: Ch. 2) provides a useful assessment of six main features which *ethnies* habitually exhibit: a common proper name; a myth of common ancestry; shared historical memories; one or more elements of common culture; a link with a homeland; and a sense of solidarity on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie's* population. It will be useful here to examine briefly each of these items in relation to the developments described in this thesis. The common proper name (as demonstrated in 5.2.1) has a mixed historical pedigree and remains a subject of bitter dispute among many Nepalis in India, as well as some within Nepal. Myths of common ancestry, whatever common features they may exhibit, lead one inexorably to constituent ethnic groups (be they Rais, Magars or Bāhun-Chhetrīs) rather than to Nepalis as a whole. Shared historical memories is also an area of some ambivalence: this is a category which might encompass the shared

*duḥkha* (hardship or sorrow) of migrants to Darjeeling, or Newar tales of righteous kings presiding over Kathmandu's golden age, but there is little evidence until recent times for historical memories which could be shared equally by all Nepalis. As far as elements of common culture go, the comparison of vegetarian, teetotal Brāhmaṇ to yak-eating, tongba-drinking Buddhist Sherpa may be a *reductio ad absurdum* but serves to underline the immense significance of the adoption of the Nepali language in providing a basis for common cultural experience. A link to the homeland of Nepal can certainly be demonstrated for most Nepalis, even those expatriated and domiciled in India, but the remembered homeland might be Khambuwan or Kathmandu rather than the state of Nepal as a single entity. Finally, as hinted above, solidarities can be differently constructed and experienced but we should not ignore the shared class experiences of peasants and manual workers as a counterpoint to the nascent commonalities of middle class culture.

This thumbnail sketch should suffice to indicate that the definition of Nepalis as an ethnic group is at least problematic. Yet of the features proposed by Smith, only the myth of common ancestry offers no space for manoeuvre for those who would engineer a group identity (and Gellner (1997: 16) argues persuasively in response to Smith that 'an ethnic group does not need to share a myth of common origin'). The common proper name of 'Nepali' did emerge—albeit from a confusing array of alternatives and bearing certain connotations—and gain universal acceptance (*pace* Ghising's later attempts at dissociation). However, the process of its emergence was not so much organic as the result of conscious shaping by both outsiders and Nepali activists. Shared historical memories could be propagated and instilled, most notably through the establishment of a canon of national heroes and its promulgation through the education system, the foundations of which process were examined in 4.2. Elements of common culture, through the acceptance and promotion of a common language, as well as through intermarriage and shared religious celebrations, could also be developed. Language *per se* is a significant omission in Smith's categories (again, cf. Gellner 1997: 14). The extent to which Nepalis felt a link to a shared historical homeland could be affected by the promotion of certain constructs of group belonging and historical significance, especially in an era where communities across South Asia sought to reinforce their sense of collective self through interwoven ties to land,

language and culture (5.3). Finally, a sense of solidarity is the element of ethnic commonality perhaps most susceptible to influence or manipulation on the basis of social, cultural and political environments, such as perhaps the shared experience of fighting in the First World War or the shared aesthetic sensibilities of writers and readers of Nepali literature.

In all of these areas, the processes of public discourse and its institutionalisation described in this thesis played a major role in creating a modern Nepali sense of group belonging. This is not to say that Nepaliness was invented or artificially constructed, but that the form in which it took shape over these decades was, sometimes deliberately and sometimes unknowingly, shaped by actors and events. The final configuration was not the inevitable culmination of an inexorable organic process so much as the outcome of a specific set of historical circumstances and cultural variables. Ultimately, the question of whether Nepalis formed or form an ethnic group is of comparative, rather than inherent, value. The category is convenient as a more or less established benchmark of current international scholarship, but questioning the interpretation of Nepaliness within Nepalis' own conceptual frameworks is more revealing and rewarding.

This chapter attempts to analyse the intellectual history of the creation of a modern sense of Nepaliness by identifying key strands of debate and subjecting them to close critical attention. The territory this study moves over is largely conceptual, and the investigation of terminology and its significations is of necessity based on semantics and a careful consideration of linguistic evidence, the aim being to present a detailed presentation of the contours of Nepali thinking and expression, and to relate it to wider theories about Nepali identity. The extensive textual corroboration presented in support of this analysis is intended as a counterpoint to the unfortunate tendency of many writings on these areas to indulge in unsubstantiated generalisations.<sup>269</sup> Engagement with previous writers on this subject also involves fundamental critiques of two influential hypotheses: that of Richard Burghart (1984) on the formation of the concept of nation-state (5.5) and that of Pratyoush

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<sup>269</sup> The sources for this study are those listed in the bibliography, with the exception of *Gorkhā Samsār*, to which I gained access only in the final stages of research. References are also weighted towards journal contributions, which reflect writing from a wide range of locations in India and Nepal, and which are perhaps more indicative of topics of debate than books.

Onta (1996) on the historical construction of a narrative of Nepali nationalism (5.4). Although interrelated, the conceptual bases on which discussion of community and identity was built are here separated into three broad categories. First, the topic of language is revisited: assessment of the process by which Nepali and its speakers were named brings clarity to an area of considerable recent debate, while the various battles fought in the name of standardisation illustrate issues of control and authority within the public sphere. Second, consideration of polity dissects Nepali understandings of statehood and citizenship before re-evaluating the role of Hinduism in providing a historical and moral framework within which Nepalis could structure and valorise their community. Third, the concept of *jāti*-hood is studied: the *jāti* was the universally invoked unit of social organisation and ethnic/national belonging with which writers articulated a unified sense of belonging but the nature of its constitution, and the range of its applicability, require reappraisal. The processes examined represent the summation of the developments brought about by the public discourse and social, cultural and political institutionalisation described in the preceding chapters. This chapter seeks to understand how an increasingly sophisticated and self-aware social consciousness enabled the rationalisation and articulation of the basic outlines of a modern Nepalihood that endures to this day. In short, it tries to answer the question of what Nepalis meant when they spoke of 'we', of how self and society were moulded into a we-as-subjects (rather than us-as-objects viewed by outsiders) commonality.

## 5.2. Language

### 5.2.1. Naming the Nepali language and its speakers

लिम्बू जिम्दार् तामङ् खस मगर गुरुङ् हायु चेपाङ् र कामी ।  
सुन्वार् लाप्चे कुसुण्डा गिरिपुरि ठकुरी थारु नेवार थामी ॥  
नेपाली जाति हामी भनिकन सबले बोलि नेपालि भाषा ।  
हाम्रो भाषा यही हो भनि तनमनले मान्दछन् मातृभाषा ॥

*Limbū, Jimdār, Tāmañ, Khas, Magar, Guruñ, Hāyu, Chepāñ and Kāmī; Sunvār, Lāpche, Kusunḍā, Giripuri, Ṭhakurī, Thāru, Nevār, Thāmī; calling ourselves the Nepali jāti and all speaking the Nepali language; saying that this indeed is our language, [all] respect the mother tongue with mind and body.*

Pārasmañi Pradhān, n.d.

The history of nomenclature for the Nepali language has been an area of some contemporary controversy, in particular during the closing period of the campaign to have Nepali included in Schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution. This culminated in a heated dispute between Gorkhaland National Liberation Front leader Subhash Ghising and the politicians, intellectuals and activists grouped under the banner of the Bhāratīya Nepālī Rāṣṭriya Pariṣad (BNRP). The former sought recognition for the language as 'Gorkha' rather than 'Nepali', a continuation of his policy of distancing Indian Nepalis from Nepal nationals. The latter combination included some who were sympathetic to the idea of using 'Gorkha' as an adjective for people and community but insisted on official acceptance of 'Nepali' and only 'Nepali' as the name of the language (a useful description of the conclusion of this battle is provided by Rāi (1993b), albeit from the perspective of one allied to the 'Nepali' cause). This is not the place for a discussion of the dispute: it may suffice to note that 'Nepali' won the day and stands alone in the Eighth Schedule. The 1992 Constitution (Seventy Eighth Amendment) Bill did, however, observe in its Statement of Objectives and Reasons that 'the Nepali language is also known in some areas as 'Gorkha Bhasa'. In the Census operations, other nomenclatures such as 'Gorkhali', 'Gorkhi', 'Gurkhiya', 'Khaskura' or 'Naipali' have also been used.' The BNRP pulled no punches in its assault on Ghising's position and the 'absurd and most unfortunate controversy' he raised, as the words of its President, Nar Bahadur Bhandari, make clear (BNRP 1992: foreword): 'We are fully aware of the actual objectives of these so called Gorkha language protagonists. They are bent upon changing the entire course of rich history and

heritage of Nepali language and literature simply through physical intimidation and other terror tactics.' A section headed 'What is Gorkha Language?' (BNRP 1992: 20) categorically rejects any historical basis for a language name other than 'Nepali':

In India, the Gorkha term is used more to denote the ethnolinguistic groups which speak Nepali language. In India, the Gorkha as a language has never existed in any literary-cultural sense of the term. As against Nepali's well documented and comprehensive socio-literary-cultural and historical background and heritage, the Gorkha as a language has virtually no trace of history.<sup>270</sup>

This divisive debate has left its imprint on much literature related to discussion of the historicity of language nomenclature in India. Within Nepal, especially from the Panchayat period, the Nepali language acquired a symbolic status indivisible from a sense of national and cultural identity, a sense reinforced by the fact that *nepālī* encompassed language, people and a political entity. There is no need to defend either *nepālī* or *gorkhā* for political reasons—and this section amply demonstrates that the simplistic claims of political partisans do not reflect the bulk of historical evidence—yet one must also question the tendency to assume a linear progression towards the logical conclusion of *nepālī* as the exclusive name. For example, Tārānāth Śarmā takes a sanguine approach to this topic, noting uncritically the variety of terminology passed through before the establishment of *nepālī*. His account does, however, imply that there was a chronological sequence of updating or replacing names, rather than the more interesting—albeit confusing—simultaneous existence and deployment of different terms.<sup>271</sup> There are also personal interests at stake in depicting a clear and conscious adoption of the name *nepālī*. With

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<sup>270</sup> The diatribe continues at length. A later bulleted list contains, for example, the following categorical statements among its answers to the question 'Why Gorkha cannot be recognised?': 'There is no language like Gorkha in India; In no state is it an official language; There is not a single evidence of literature written in Gorkha in India...' (BNRP 1992: 26).

<sup>271</sup> He deals with this area in most detail (1994/95: 46) when introducing what he terms the 'Motīrām era' (cf. 2.1): 'Although this era was not able to embrace the word 'Nepali', it did consciously adopt the 'gorkhā bhāṣā' of the 'gorkhā rāj' as a common language of government (*rājbhāṣā*). Termed 'lokbhāṣā' by Śaktivallabh Arjyāl in the pre-Bhānubhakta era, 'gorkhālī bhāṣā' by Paṇḍit Daivajñakesari Arjyāl and 'rājbhāṣā' by Hīnavyākaraṇī Vidyāpati of the Bhānubhakta era, even if it was also termed 'gorkhā bhāṣā' by Motīrām Bhaṭṭa it had at last managed to become a medium for exchange of opinions among conscious men of letters.' He notes also the influence of British nomenclature in Ayton's *A Grammar of the Nepalese Language* (Calcutta, 1820) and Turnbull's *Nepali Grammar and English-Nepali, Nepali-English Dictionary* (Darjeeling, 1887).

reference to Pārasmaṇi's use of *gorkhā bhāṣā* (C1(5): editorial), his son Nagendramaṇi Pradhān (1991: 73) is quick to offer an apologia:

After Calcutta University had approved the Nepali vernacular for Matriculation, IA and BA, the educated class of this tract of India, which had been describing its mother tongue with Nepali/Gorkhali as synonyms, now fully adopted 'Nepali' alone as the name for the language. However, unable to abandon their habits instantly, writers generally carried on using both language names as synonyms for some time. From 1919 until his death, Śrī Pārasmaṇi Pradhān adorned the books, textbooks, various articles, etc. that he wrote with the language name 'Nepali'.

This assertion implies that *nepālī* had little currency before its endorsement by Calcutta University and that this was a pivotal event after which Pārasmaṇi led a rapid shift away from *gorkhālī* to *nepālī*. Elsewhere, Pradhān (1991: 149) specifically claims that it was only with the publication of *Chandrikā* that *nepālī* was adopted as the language name in India. As the analysis presented below demonstrates, such a claim is spurious and belies the complexities of the process by which *nepālī* became predominant. This section contends that language nomenclature is not (*pace* Ghising, Bhandari, et al.) so much of interest in its own right as in relation to the emergence of a conscious sense of an enumerable Nepali community that stretched across geographical regions and ethnic boundaries.

For the sake of precision we may start by noting that *gorkhālī* was not a term commonly applied to the language. One of the very rare usages within Nepali journals is, ironically, by Pārasmaṇi himself, who refers to 'nepālī (gorkhālī)' in an editorial comment (C1(2): 24).<sup>272</sup> From within Nepal, the title page of the GBPS's letter-writing guide *Gorakhā-patrabodh* (Āchārya Dīkṣit 1922/23a) includes *gorakhālī bolī* in a concentrated demonstration of the confusingly overlapping terms for country, city and language: the book is published in 'Nepal, Gorkha-capital' by the 'Gorkha Education Department' in 'Gorkhali speech', at the order of the 'Nepal government', by the Gorkha Language Publishing Committee. The currency of *gorkhālī* elsewhere as designator of a form of speech is attributable to its adoption by British Gurkha officers and its use (as 'Gurkhali') is basically restricted to English. Other names which appear only rarely include *pārvatīya*

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<sup>272</sup> A similarly rare later (1930) appearance is in *Ādarśa* (1(7-8): 105), where an editorial refers to 'publishing a monthly journal in the Nepali or Gorkhali speech'.

(literally 'of the hills')<sup>273</sup> and *khas*.<sup>274</sup> The struggle for supremacy was undoubtedly between *gorkhā*<sup>275</sup> and *nepālī*, although this struggle is better understood as coexistence accompanied by a very gradual change in preferred usage.

Certainly the determined adoption of *nepālī* dates to well before the publication of *Chandrikā* or Calcutta University's sanction. Early textbooks had labelled themselves as *nepālī* from at least 1907,<sup>276</sup> both *Sundarī* and *Mādhavī* used the name consistently, and other populist publications from Banaras had embraced the term (cf. 2.3). *Chandra*'s first editorial clearly established *nepālī* as the name for the language,<sup>277</sup> although subsequent contributors to the journal preferred *gorkhā*. Usage of *nepālī* was rare, one striking exception being Chet's appeal to 'lovers of the Nepali language' (1915: 15) which noted the duty of 'Nepalis' towards the 'Nepali' language. Writers in *Chandrikā* also exhibited flexibility: it is not surprising that the reviewer of the Gorkha Agency's *Gorkhā-bhāṣā*, should pepper his text with *gorkhā bhāṣā* (C1(3): 24), but other writers, not least Pārasmaṇi, were happy to retain *gorkhābhāṣā* even when there was no obvious contextual prompting.<sup>278</sup> Still, there was an identifiable trend towards *nepālī* and later Indian Nepali

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<sup>273</sup> For example, Khanāl (1918: 6) writes in comparison with other more advanced Indian languages of 'our mother tongue (*pārvatīya*)'.

<sup>274</sup> A solitary example from journals, Upretī (1919: 106), makes clear the colloquial scope of this term: 'The national language [of Nepal] is Nepali, which people call '*khas*' *kurā* [*khas* speech]'. The prominent British linguist and editor of the immense *Linguistic Survey of India*, George Grierson, expressed a preference for the term *khas kurā*, 'this being the term employed in British India by the people who speak it' (1916: 18).

<sup>275</sup> Various *gorkhā bhāṣā*, *gorkhā-bhāṣā* or *gorkhābhāṣā*, and *gorkhā* alone if used as a qualifier, as in *Gorkhā Grantha Pracharak Maṇḍalī* or *Gorkhā Sāhitya Samiti*.

<sup>276</sup> Guruṇ's *Nepālī pahilā pustak* (1907), Viśvarāj Harihar's *Nepālī pahilī pustak* (15,000 copies in 1911 and 1912); cf. 4.2.

<sup>277</sup> It is first described as *nepālī bhāṣā* in the opening sentence, placed in the context of other Indian languages (*Chandra* (1): 1), with at least four further instances in the first two pages. The readership's supposed ownership of the language is emphasised by repeated use of *āphnū bhāṣā* 'one's own language'.

<sup>278</sup> Even the campaign for university recognition had not forced coalescence around *nepālī*. Khanāl's thoughts on *pārvatīya* prompted Pārasmaṇi to comment in an editorial footnote that 'our mother tongue... the *gorkhābhāṣā* has not received the good fortune of gaining a place in Calcutta University. By submitting what sort of petition might the *gorkhābhāṣā* gain a place?' (Khanāl 1918: 6, fn.). The Hari Printing Press, managed by Pārasmaṇi, advertised the printing of 'a new book in the *gorkhābhāṣā*' (e.g. C1(7): 26) and Pārasmaṇi also wrote of *gorkhālīs* speaking the *gorkhā* language (1(11): 15). *Chandrikā*'s final reference to Nepali as *gorkhā bhāṣā* can be found in an editorial—almost certainly Pārasmaṇi's, despite the fact that it appeared during the period when he was handing over the editorship of the journal to Raśmī Prasād Ale—from July 1919, a full year after Calcutta

journals abandoned *gorkhā* entirely: Thus *nepālī* is used consistently in all circumstances in *Ādarśa* and *Nebulā*. Other institutional developments—in India, most significantly the establishment of Darjeeling's Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan (1924), and in Nepal the substitution of *nepālī* for *gorkhā* in the government's Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti (1930)—represented this shift, although there was not a neat progression: Banaras's Nepali Library predated Kurseong's Gorkha Library and *gorkhā* remained a common part of later institution names, such as the GDNS and AIGL (4.3). The government of Nepal saw no need to assign any formal legal status to Nepali until the 1958 Constitution finally declared Nepali in the *devanāgarī* script to be the national language (Hutt 1988: 41-46).

The significance of language nomenclature lies in its close relationship to developing concepts of community. Chapter 3 examined the central role of *mātrbhāṣā*—symbolically and practically—in the rhetoric of social improvement while subsequent sections have demonstrated that the Nepali language was a key unifying element of a putative Nepali society. However, analysis of the ways in which Nepalis named themselves again demonstrates a continuing heterogeneity of community identification which reflects the fluid state of the community's definition. As a schoolboy, Pārasmaṇi was already aware of Nepalis' backwardness and the need for social progress focused on language. Yet he calls upon *gorkhālī*, *nyepālī* and *gorkhā* as he struggles to invoke a united social or ethnic body:

हरे! गोरखाली तिमी नीदमा छौ ।  
अरू जाति भन्दा पछाडी छौ ॥  
भयो नीद आलस्य सव् त्यागि देऊ  
सबै मिलमीली स्वभाव बढाऊ  
पचास लाख भन्दा बेसी छ न्येपाली ।  
बडो खेद !! भाषा छ सारै पछाडी ॥

...  
यता छन् न्यपाली उता छन् न्यपाली  
अहा ! वीर गोर्खा कतै छैन खाली ॥  
धियो एक पाली अनेकको अगाडी  
भयो यस पाली सबैको पछाडी  
हरे शोक !!! यस्तो दशा वीर्हरूको  
अहो वीर !! तिम्रो विरत्व: कहाँ गो?

Alas! Gorkhali, you are asleep,  
You are behind other *jātis*.  
Enough! Give up all sleep and lethargy,  
Join with others and advance [your] nature.  
There are more than 50 lakh Nepalis  
But great shame!! The language is very behind.

...  
There are Nepalis here, Nepalis there  
But oh! there is just no brave Gorkha  
anywhere.  
Once [he] was ahead of many,  
Now he has fallen behind all.  
Oh sorrow!!! The brave in such a sad state.

Oh brave one!! Where has your bravery gone?

(Pradhān 1913)

In fact, the community of speakers of Nepali did not even have to be named explicitly: the shared means of communication could be enough in itself to identify its users. Thus *Chandra* (1: 1) can reach out to a wide audience—'the number of speakers of this language is lakhs'—which could, at least theoretically, be counted and thereby compared to other groups consisting of 'people who speak the language'. Later, the opening sentence of Pārasmaṇi's explanatory editorial article in the first issue of *Chandrikā* (1918b: 2) was more specific, talking of 'some 52 lakh of *gorkhā jāti*' who speak the Gorkha language (cf. 5.5 on the enumeration of Nepalis). The scope of a community defined by its shared language was impressive: fifteen years later the first issue of *Ādarśa* could appeal for distributors in 'Bengal, Assam, Burma, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, Panjab, Calcutta, Banaras and other such places wherever there are people who know the Nepali language'. Its editor (1(7-8): 105) could be confident of the range of people included in the speech community: 'the language which is spoken by so many lakhs of Nepalis in the whole of India and throughout Nepal, from kings, princes and money-men to coolies and scrap-dealers'.

Yet the speech community was marked by a flexibility of membership. Responding to exhortations addressed to 'our Gorkhali connoisseur gentlemen! (*rasik mahāśay harū*)... lovers of their own mother tongue (*gorkhā bhāṣā*)' (Āryāl 1915: 3, 7), 'lovers of the Nepali language!' (Chet 1915: 15) or 'dear Gorkha language enthusiasts!' (Thāpā 1918: 26) was surely a matter of choice. The sense of a shared language reflecting a shared sense of belonging had to be cultivated, hence Sūryavikram's reminder (Jñāvālī 1918: 17-18, cited above) that 'the language which you speak they too speak. Your happiness and sorrows are also theirs.' Contributors to journals consciously or subconsciously reinforced the feeling of 'we-ness' and joint ownership: Āryāl (1915: 4) spoke of 'our literature and language'; an appeal for the Nepali Library (*Chandra* (7): 19) urged that 'it is fitting for Nepalis alone to promote their own mother tongue with body, mind and wealth'; the recognition of 'our mother tongue (Nepali)' by Calcutta University (C1(9): 41) was an occasion for 'all Nepali gentlemen (*sabai nepālī sajjan bṛnda*)' to be delighted and to commit themselves to work for 'our language'; Āryāl (1918b: 10) repeatedly mentions 'our mother tongue' (as both a

masculine and feminine noun). Gradually the foundations of a community whose membership rested on a common language were strengthened.

The sense of language as cultural capital, or the means for transmission of a unique culture, was implicit in some discourse but not clearly expressed until Rūpnārāyaṇ Siṃh's essay on 'novels and stories' (1930: 38) prompted an editorial comment on the value of group narratives: 'every *jāti* in the world has its own oral stories about its customs and manners, social and periodic institutions (*sāmājīk ra sāmāyīk prathā sambandhī*). In our society there are many such stories.' Noting that Lal Bihari De had produced *Folk Tales of Bengal* and that the Bengal Asiatic Society had published a collection of Lepcha stories, it requested readers to send in Nepali folk tales so that they could be compiled into a 'good and worthwhile book'. Elsewhere, in contradiction to the equation of one language with one culture, Guruṅ (1935: 3) explained that Nepali-speakers included many non-mother tongue speakers: 'within the Nepali *jāti* there are many small *jātis* and they have their different languages yet still speak the Nepali language'. The confusion this brought to the definition of 'mother tongue' was addressed by Dharaṅīdhar (Koirālā 1923: 8): 'The mother tongue is that language which we start learning from when we first speak with our own mothers: as there are various *jāts* and *thars* among us Nepalis and Gorkhalis speaking of it in this way is slightly inaccurate'. He recognised that ideally Newars and Gurungs should be able to be educated in their own languages but in practice the emerging dominance (*prādhānya*) of Nepali meant that it should be adopted as the effective *māṭṛbhāṣā* for educational purposes, and 'one could also call it *rāṣṭrabhāṣā*' (*ibid.*: 8).

There remained confusion over the naming of the Nepali speech community. For qualifying *speakers* of the language, *gorkhā* had limited currency and clearly circumscribed connotations: although having a general sense when qualifying *samāj* or *jāti*,<sup>279</sup> when standing alone its primary reference was martial (thus Sedhāīm's 'To a Gorkha soldier' (1915), the 'brave *gorkhā jāti*' (Śeṣ Maṅi Pradhān 1918: 17), and 'the bravery of Gorkhas ... Gorkha soldiers' (C2(4): 116)). This may be one reason why educated participants in

<sup>279</sup> With *samāj*: C1(3): 24, Lāmā (1918: 20), C1(6): 22, Vaidya (1918: 22), Thāpā (1918: 26), Koirālā (1919: 57), C2(7): 151. With *jāti*: C1(1): 22, Upretī (1919: 104-05), C2(4): 115, 116. Such usages are addressed in the discussion of *jāti* (5.5).

Nepali public discourse—of whom only a minority had military backgrounds—preferred not to adopt *gorkhā* as a standard adjective for Nepali people as a whole unless qualified by a term that expressly widened the bounds of its inclusiveness. However, as the opening of an appeal by Darjeeling's Gorkhā Samiti implies ('Among us Gorkha or Nepali *jāti* brothers'; C2(4): 115), the two names could coexist without any serious conflict of reference. Other possible names, such as *pārvatīya*, were almost universally rejected.<sup>280</sup>

The only serious rival to *nepālī* was *gorkhālī*.<sup>281</sup> This term too could have military overtones<sup>282</sup> but its reference was normally more neutral. The Secretary of Kurseong's Gorkha Library (C1(1): 18) could speak of 'lakhs of Gorkhalis ... unknown Gorkhalis ... all Gorkhali gentlemen' while Bhīmdal Divān (1918: 24) was even more inclusive: 'All Gorkhalis living in Mugalan ... esteemed Gorkhali people (*mañijan*) ... we Gorkhalis ... in our Gorkhalis ... among our Gorkhalis ... our Gorkhalis have filled Darjeeling, Sikkim and some parts of Jalpai district.' In Pārasmaṇi and Gaṅgāprasād's dispute (C1(1): 24), both parties referred to the Nepali population at large as *gorkhālī*, while an advert in the same issue of *Chandrikā* declares that the Hari Printing Press has been established 'for the

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<sup>280</sup> Despite its occasional use for the Nepali language and its application by outsiders, *pārvatīya* did not gain any general acceptance as a name for Nepalis, nor much currency in its present sense of hill Bāhuns, Chhetrīs and other ancestral Nepali speakers. When deployed in the Darjeeling context it referred more broadly to members of the hill communities. This was already the case when 'pārvatīya gentlemen' were expected to be happy at the Tibetan Laden La's appointment as Deputy Superintendent of Police (C1(1): 23) and is most clearly defined by the time of *Nebulā* (1935) when Nepalis have become demarcated as one of the three ethnic constituents—alongside Bhutias and Lepchas—of the *pārvatīya* community. The Kurseong Gorkha Library's use of *pārvatīya* to describe Nepalis (C1(9): 32, 1(12): 2) may have been a peculiarity of its Secretary Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān. The archaic *naipālīya* (*Chandra* (4): 24) and the compromise *nepālīya* (Chet 1918: 5) were not destined to catch on, nor were Pārasmaṇi's metrically convenient alternative spellings of *nyapālī* and *nyepālī* (cited above).

<sup>281</sup> Frequently spelled *gorakhālī*: I have emended to a consistent transliteration of *gorkhālī*. There is no significance in the different spellings other than as a comment on continuing orthographic inconsistency (for example, the now obsolete *gorakhālī* could still be seen in *Ādarśa* (1(3): 48) in 1930, even after Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān (GKK 28(9): 69) was using *gorkhālī*).

<sup>282</sup> For example, Pārasmaṇi speaks of 'we who are the "brave *gorkhālī jāti*"' (C1(11): 15) and Dhūṅyāl's 'Gajal dhūn deś' (1918) has the refrain '...of the brave Gorkhali'. Sedhām's paeon to the *gorkhā* soldier (1915; cited above) actually concludes with a call to establish the pride of the *gorkhālī*, demonstrating either the two terms' overlapping usage, or the ability of *gorkhā* military kudos to reflect on the wider *gorkhālī* community. The fact that many Nepalis (of India and Nepal; cf. fn. 86) were fighting in the First World War must have encouraged those of non-military backgrounds to associate themselves, however loosely, with the supposed martial qualities widely praised in Nepali soldiers (5.4). Enlisted men in this period had also enlarged the Nepali reading public and become a market for entrepreneurial writers and publishers (2.2, 2.3.3).

convenience of all Gorkhali gentlemen'. Maṇisimh Guruṅ (1918: 12) is concerned with the character of society (at one point specified as *gorkhā samāj*) but when he departs from a general 'we' to name the group concerned he too opts for *gorkhālī*. This term has the added convenience of not being tied to nationhood or citizenship: Ḍhuṅyāl (1918: 22) refers to 'we 66 lakh Gorkhalis in Nepal and India together... our Gorkhali society', while long after his conversion to *nepālī* as the appropriate name for the language, Pārasmaṇi (1935: 16) writes 'to this side is the Tibetans' Tibet (*bhoṭeharūko bhoṭ*), to that side the Gorkhalis' Nepal and on the other side the country (*muluk*) of the Lepchas. And the meeting of us Tibetans, Gorkhalis and Lepchas in this place.' Thus *gorkhālī* contributed to a sense of wider community solidarity and over a long period maintained its position as an alternative to *nepālī*.<sup>283</sup>

However, *nepālī* was destined to build on its increasingly dominant position as a name for the language, as the Nepali Library's appeal for funds (C1(1): 21) illustrates with its comparison of the 'gentlemen of each *jāti*' to 'we Nepalis of Kashi'. Indeed, *nepālī* was often used in contradistinction to other peoples or *jātis*: it is a *nepālī* gentleman who is cheated by a cunning Bengali in a news report from Calcutta (C1(2): 21); when Sūryavikram (Jñavālī 1918: 4) railed at his fellow countrymen's backwardness in comparison to other peoples it was 'educated Nepalis' who bore the brunt of his wrath; a 'restless traveller' (C1(12): 10) noted that 'if a brother of any other country asks 'what *jāti* are you?'... we say "Nepali"', yet this same writer refers on the previous page to 'we Gorkhalis'. There was apparently a growing awareness that *nepālī* provided a designation that stood better alongside other major Indian groups such as Bengalis, and mirrored their achievement of a name that simultaneously described land, language and people. Thus by the end of the period under consideration, *nepālī* had been established as the exclusive name for the language and as the widely preferred name for Nepalis of India and Nepal.

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<sup>283</sup> Community 'we-ness' was often reinforced by *gorkhālī*: the phrase 'we Gorkhalis'—as used by Pārasmaṇi above (fn. 282)—recurs in many locations, such as C1(12): 10 and GKK (28(9): 69).

### 5.2.2. Standardisation and the question of authority

भाषाका नियमहरू बनाइन्छन्, शुद्ध भाषा लेखेर मात्र सृजना हुँदैन। हो, भाषामा कतिपय नियमहरू मानिन्छन् र मानिनुपर्छ तर कबीरले भने झै भाषा बग्दो पानी हो, नियमहरू मात्रमा बाँध्नखोजे भाषा कूवाको पानी हुन्छ।

*The rules of language are made, but creation is not just a matter of writing correct language. Yes, in language various rules are observed and should be observed, but as Kabir says: language is running water, if one only seeks to bind it up in rules it becomes well water.*

(Pradhān 1982: 61)

More than just a medium, language was itself a topic of intense discussion and a central concern for the negotiation of authority within the public sphere. Debate over standardisation emerged alongside not only the rhetorical recognition the *māṭṛbhāṣā*'s role in social progress (3.3) but also an increasing linking of language to people, of medium of communication to social solidarity, of linguistic uniformity to ethnic and cultural unity. Thus Āryāl and Sedhāim (1917: preface), explaining why they have published a monograph that had been planned for some time, prefigure the Panchayat ideology of one country, one language, one people: 'For some time thoughtful gentlemen have started to consider that it is very necessary that in the whole kingdom there should be only one language and one script; therefore the Gorkha language and the *devanāgarī* script are worthy of being principal (*mukhya*).' It is, however, a demonstration of the language's lack of definitive status that they have to propose it in such a manner: Nepali's assumption of an official national role was not seen as inevitable and the slightly ambivalent 'principal' still implied a relative position rather than absolute supremacy. Even as Nepali's endorsement by the state of Nepal remained uncertain, important questions of its form, usage and ownership were being brought into the arena of public debate. Language could also be—as *Mādhavī*'s rule that 'the use of "Urdu" words in articles will not be considered correct, rather Sanskrit words should be used'—a political statement of cultural affiliation. Proposals for codification raised issues of authority that led to conflict between would-be centres of power: who had the mandate to rule on standards?

Pārasmaṇi had realised from a young age that his vision of progress for the Nepali language and its speakers demanded greater efforts than those so far demonstrated by the missionaries. He had faith in the commitment of 'Gorkhalis' to their language but was

alarmed (1917: 92) by the poor quality of the available grammars and the quality of language usage they might in turn promote:

Seeing their language in a truly pitiful state (*sāhrai hīnāvasthāmā*), Gorkhalis everywhere are raising the cry that we must work for its *unnati*: day by day new books are being published to make our literature beautiful in its every limb (*sarvāṅga sundar*). Recognising that language improvement cannot take place without grammars, three or four grammars have been prepared and distributed. Among these the Gorkha grammars written by the Reverends Kilgour, Turnbull and Ayton are useless. They ruin the language (*bhāṣā bigārdachhan*). How could one expect high quality grammars from those who don't know the context of the language!

It was against this background that a battle over linguistic territory developed between *Chandrikā* and the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*, or rather between their editors, a battle that is still being fought by proxy between the descendants and supporters of each of the parties (cf. Pradhān 1991, Kārthak 2001). The subject for the dispute was language—although this served partly as a pretext for airing grievances relating to fundamental religious differences—and in particular the stylistic gulf between Gaṅgāprasād's colloquial but inconsistent Nepali and Pārasmaṇi's sophisticated but inaccessible register. There is no doubt that Gaṅgāprasād's Nepali was idiosyncratic, particularly in its spelling, and tended to prefer transcription of vernacular pronunciation to standard Sanskrit orthography. Yet while the language of *Chandrikā* was graced by more rarefied vocabulary, it also displayed significant inconsistencies and lack of grammatical uniformity.<sup>284</sup>

Various examples in Chapter 1.3 have illustrated the early concern even of commercial publishers for *śuddha* (pure, uncontaminated, virtuous, error-free) language. The range of meaning of the term is not insignificant, for beyond correctness *śuddha* writing aimed also for an ideal of a language not merely conforming to rules but laying claim to a higher

<sup>284</sup> There is unfortunately no space here to treat in detail the vagaries of either camp's Nepali usage, although this is a topic still crying out for serious scholarly attention and analysis based on a wide sampling of text rather than instinctive dismissal of presumed tendencies. As far as the style of *Chandrikā* is concerned, a very few examples from a single page (1(1): 6) may be illustrative of the gaps that still remained between its orthography and the modern standard: 'bhaye thye', 'rahaṁda thiye', 'vāhām', 'pailhe', both 'mā' and 'mām', postpositions all written as separate words. Through the first volume of *Chandrikā*, however, some general trends can be discerned: postpositions—albeit inconsistently—are more often joined to nouns/pronouns, some verbal forms appear joined up, *e* often replaces *ye* in verbal forms such as 'bhaeko'. The very frequent substitution of *ba* for *va* (though rarely vice versa: this is not free variation) continues throughout, but some spellings are updated: for example one can observe the relinquishing of the use of *ñ*+vowel to indicate a nasalised vowel (thus नञा *nañā* is gradually replaced by नयौ *naṃyā*; cf. fn. 69).

purity.<sup>285</sup> In the Hindu hierarchy of expression, Nepali could only ever aspire to the status of *lokbhāṣā* (worldly language) below the divine *devavāṇī*: this largely explains the disdain of Sanskrit-educated *paṇḍits* for the lowly vernacular (cf. 3.4.1). Accuracy for its own sake was perhaps first sought by the European missionaries who used the well-established formalities of Latin and Greek grammars as the yardstick against which to measure their efforts to impose uniformity on Nepali. Rev. Turnbull's apologies in the preface to his pioneering dictionary (1887) make clear his sense of having failed to meet this benchmark: 'The present work makes no pretensions to absolute accuracy, any more than to perfect finality ... what is here attempted is a work, not of authoritative scholarship at all, but only of practical utility meanwhile.' There was also a divine impulse in the missionaries' work: their goal of accuracy may have been shaped by classical primers but was inspired by the desire to mould a fitting and lasting vehicle for the transmission of their creed. As Turnbull concluded his apologia: 'If for nothing else than to secure uniformity in orthography and construction in the translation of the Scriptures now in course, a step of the kind had become imperative.' The combined work of Turnbull's successors Kilgour and Duncan led to the publication of a reasonably substantial *English-Nepali Dictionary* (Duncan 1923). Throughout the process of compiling the dictionary, Pārasmaṇi's rival in the battle over Nepali standardisation Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān had been a major influence and assistant. Duncan's preface acknowledges the fact that the standards they have adopted are already contentious:

The spelling adopted in this volume is that used by the Rev. A. Turnbull in his grammar and followed in the Nepali translation of the Bible. I am aware that this form of spelling differs somewhat from that in use by the authorities at Kathmandu, but it seemed best to follow, for the present, the forms adopted by Mr Turnbull whose grammar is still regarded as the standard work in the English language.<sup>286</sup>

<sup>285</sup> In current usage, *śuddha nepālī* (in much the same way as *śuddha hindī*) generally refers to a high, official, Sanskritic register (with the exclusion of many Perso-Arabic-origin and English words) which is rarely attained in everyday speech.

<sup>286</sup> The orthography also reflects that of the *New Testament* in Nepali printed at the Calcutta Baptist Mission Press in 1904. This translation's language is simple and readily intelligible but spellings and grammar follow the Turnbull/Kilgour/Gaṅgāprasād model rather than the modern standard. See Kārthak (2001: 122-31) for details and extracts from Genesis and the Song of Songs which demonstrate the general style.

Indeed, he must have been aware that the 'form of spelling' endorsed by his dictionary also contradicted the emerging standards of Nepali writers in Darjeeling and across India, as well as the authorities in Kathmandu. However, their dictionary in itself was not likely to have a wide impact on local practice: priced at Rs 9 it was beyond the reach of almost all Nepalis.

Forms of spelling and rules of grammar were code for a battle over control of the Nepali language which was already being vigorously waged in the public sphere as different participants staked their claims to cultural authority quite independently to the missionaries' efforts. By this stage Rāmmani Āchārya Dīkṣit was already engaged on his long-running *halanta bahiṣkār* campaign, which brought him into public conflict with Dīnanāth Sāpkoṭā.<sup>287</sup> An early review in *Chandrikā* (1(3): 24) dealt with Āryāl and Sedhāim's *Gorakhā-bhāṣā* (1917) and broached the subject of orthographic uniformity: while the book's preface had itself noted that all books in the Gorkha Agency's *granthamālā* would be edited according to the rules in Hemrāj Paṇḍit's grammar of Nepali, the reviewer picked up on inconsistencies and questioned the authors' choice of forms. The review hoped that these would be rectified in a second edition but before that could come about Pārasmani had himself entered the field of grammar codification with a direct challenge to existing experts in the field. The preface to the first edition of his and Śeṣ Maṇi's *Nepālī vyākaraṇ* (1920) set out their inspiration: 'Literature without grammar is like a meal without salt ... But in the Nepali language no one has written a good grammar to date. It is not our intention to say that there are no grammars in the Nepali language at all: there are vernacular grammars, plenty of them, but every one of them is marked by some fault or other.'

The new grammar's significance far exceeded its linguistic importance, for its production represented a direct challenge to Hemrāj Paṇḍit's authority and an attempt to seize cultural power through the exercise of new means control. This exercise was in itself potently symbolic. As *rājgurū* to Nepal's royal family, Hemrāj's influence over language usage had three basic sources of legitimation: his status as a Brāhmaṇ Sanskrit scholar, his

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<sup>287</sup> See Āchārya (1982/83) for a description of this and subsequent reform efforts in Nepali; Clark (1969) and Bandhu (in Friedman 1976: 103-13) also discuss orthographic standardisation.

spiritual power as one of the most senior religious authorities in Nepal, and the implied temporal power of association with the royal court. In stark contrast, the Pradhāns came from a historically Newari-speaking background and could only lay claim to a newly-earned social status through their formal educational achievements, publishing ventures in the public realm, and the professional endorsement of government service. While their grammar could simply be listed as the latest in a series of efforts, this would misrepresent its position at the fulcrum of a paradigm shift in the distribution of authority within the Indian Nepali public sphere. The authors do acknowledge the help of Hemrāj's grammar (also, like Pārasmaṇi's journal, titled *Chandrikā*) in preparing their own work but give priority to thanking prominent missionary educationist and Kalimpong headmaster Dr Sutherland for his assistance in making the book suitable for school use. Their grammar would find its justification and the means for its propagation in a system of public instruction sanctioned by civil authorities that had no effective parallel within Nepal. Surely it is not just a slip of the pen which leads the Pradhāns to offer Hemrāj 'thousands' of thanks while Dr Sutherland receives 'tens of millions'.<sup>288</sup> The figures, however metaphorical, indicate a shift in the criteria for evaluating contributions to the Nepali language's development, with the introduction of entirely new variables furnished by the demands of structured British-style education: 'The Nepali language has gained a place in universities. Seeing the need for a grammar for students in those universities, and being requested by friends to write a grammar suitable for students, we have offered this small grammar.'

The book (affordably priced at 10 annas) was a success and ran to a revised and enlarged second edition in 1928. It incorporated examples from Nepali poets, especially the 'famous poet' Lekhnāth, and Dharaṇīdhar, 'examiner of Sanskrit and Nepali in Calcutta University, esteemed poet, and Bachelor of Arts' (preface to second edition), whose epithets emphasize his double qualification as writer and graduate. The poetic citations, however, are subjugated to a traditional interpretation of grammar as a prescriptive tool

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<sup>288</sup> Pārasmaṇi had earlier (C1(8-9): 41) been somewhat more generous in his description of Hemrāj's work: 'As far as grammars go, there is one published by the grace of our learning enthusiast Śrī 6 Gururāj Hemrāj Paṇḍit jyū. That too is only suitable for students in higher education.'

which will bring order and control to language and expression. As the opening words of the grammar itself (1928: 1) emphasise, 'a grammar from which one learns how to speak or write the Nepali language correctly (*śuddha garī*) is called a Nepali grammar'. The prominence given to prescription over description at a stage when many issues of style and substance in Nepali usage remained moot points implied the arrogation of a power to judge and confer legitimacy. While a grammarian such as Hemrāj could rely on traditional endorsement of his position to make *ex cathedra* statements on proper usage, the Pradhāns depended on the approval of readers, publishers, the educational establishment, and their peers in the realm of public discourse.<sup>289</sup> Encouraged by the success of their grammar's initial edition, their new preface saw opportunities for further codification and curbing of poetic licence through the creation of a dictionary: 'Until now in the Nepali language as no one has written a suitable dictionary, one sees that the writers of literature have taken to writing according to whim'. Although they take it upon themselves to fill this gap in the inventory of colonial-inspired linguistic collection and classification, they recognise that there will be differing viewpoints, inviting 'scholars of the Nepali language' to make clear to them 'their own various (*āphnā āphnā*) opinions'.

Yet the attempted imposition of a contentious uniformity could not fail to arouse dissent, and to spark battles over parts of the linguistic territory which were under dispute. It was Nepali standardisation that brought tensions between the erstwhile collaborators Pārasmaṇi and Sūryavikram to a head, marring their relationship from the 1920s until their old age. Sūryavikram reacted passionately to what he saw as Pārasmaṇi's wrong-headed attempts to enforce a single 'correct' form of the language when other tasks remained paramount. Using the platform of the *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā* he put his argument most forcefully in a well-argued essay entitled 'Variety in the writing of Nepali words' (1935b). As usual, Sūryavikram stands apart from his peers in his breadth of reference and persuasiveness, setting his argument in a historical context of the relatively recent widespread use of Nepali for formal purposes (*ibid.*: 55-57). Highlighting the new pressures introduced by the moulding of Nepali to fit the demands of modern education, he

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<sup>289</sup> This is not to say that Hemrāj was divorced from other concerns: he too had a press installed and published his own grammar as well as other books (Āryāl 1915: 6).

contended that Nepali literature was growing along with the *unnati* of the Nepali *jāti* and that this made the creation of a standard grammar a difficult task. He noted that various writers were creating inconsistency in many areas of usage, from verbal forms to the use of Nepali special sayings and the influence of foreign languages. Without naming names, he questioned the logic of 'educated people today' concentrating on trying to stop the 'natural and free development' of orthography while ignoring these other pressing areas. His pointed observation that there was no modern day Pāṇini to provide a universally acclaimed grammar for Nepali must have been well taken, but as there was no similar talent for any other language either, 'the absence of a universally acceptable grammar in the Nepali language is not so amazing nor is its absence reason for Nepalis to drop dead of shame' (*ibid.*: 58).

His quarrel was not solely with Pārasmaṇi—dismissal of revisions to Sanskrit *tatsama* spelling was a clear rejection of Turner as well as the Gaṅgāprasād-Turnbull-Kilgour-Duncan school—but it was the dispute within the family of Nepali-speakers that concerned him most. Thus his analogy that different sons may choose to give their mother different coloured clothes and it is not for one of them to declare that only a certain colour is acceptable reflected alarm at efforts to dictate acceptability rather than allow it to emerge from a slow process of consensus-building (*ibid.*: 59). Other Indian languages offered examples: only 20 years previously there was plenty of disagreement on spelling in Hindi but gradually these differences had been resolved. He proposed that Nepali writers should learn from this and not try to impose their will on all other writers: a natural process of standardisation had already eliminated discrepancies in many words (such as the vowels of *pānī, rānī, bahinī, nātinī*, etc.) and such a process alone would bring 'actual' uniformity (*ibid.*: 61). The implication was that any imposed solution is artificial and not necessarily durable.

Sūryavikam's more urgent concern had direct political parallels: Nepali was an independent (*svatantra*) language but many writers' wanton adoption of styles and words from other languages such as English, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali was destroying the natural style and cadence of Nepali (*ibid.*: 64). For example, he cited the intrusion of the Hindi conjunction *ki* as being both ungainly and un-Nepali; arguing that verbs and their usage are

the source of Nepali's purity he identified the introduction of new verbal constructions borrowed from other languages as particularly damaging for Nepali's distinctiveness. No doubt aware that his opposition to orthographic standardisation could be seen as petty, Sūryavikram devoted his closing paragraphs to a strident plea for the development of Nepali to be seen as indivisible from *jāti* pride (*ibid.*: 65):

We are an independent *jāti* and we have been created in order to fulfil some purpose in the world (*viśvamā kehī kāryya sampanna garna*). Thus it is my firm belief that the world must listen to our dialogue (*saṃvād*) also in our very own language. Our forefathers' time has been spent in carrying out many other important tasks to establish the Nepali *jāti*. The seeds scattered by [poets known and unknown] upon the field prepared by our forefathers are just beginning to produce shoots and our foremost duty is to ensure their growth day by day through the fertiliser and water of our service to literature.

From the unpromising grounds of an argument rooted in pedantry and personal rivalries Sūryavikram had—characteristically but nonetheless impressively—developed a tour de force that culminated with a polemic flourish. And the climax of his reasoning was also the staking of a claim, the invocation of ancestors and inherited cultural duties also a symbol of legitimation. For the most important aspect of Sūryavikram and Pārasmaṇi's orthographic dispute was that they were fighting not because of any fundamental disagreement but rather because they were on the same side: their battle was internecine not just because of their personal association but because they were both seeking the same transfer of authority. Thus it is that Sūryavikram's final salvo was aimed not at Pārasmaṇi but at the entrenched controllers of the Nepali language (*ibid.*: 65-66):

One hears the news that recently in Nepal it has been decided to write words in a certain way and the education department there has also approved that decision. It does not seem to me that the entire Nepali community of letters (*sampūrṇa nepālī śabda-samūh*) will be bound by this effort of litterateurs from there, and probably Nepal's litterateurs would say the same thing. Many of Nepal's established litterateurs have yet to accept this decision. Thus if for any reason we mother-tongue-lovers resident in India are unable to accept this decision then its learned originators may not be too surprised and for us too this should be no cause for amazement. Even though many [Nepali] mother-tongue-lovers of India recognise Nepal as the centre of language and its language as the ideal, I do not think anyone has said that everything written by Nepal's learned writers, or the opinions they produce, are ideal for us. And there is nothing to say that only writers born and brought up in Nepal have any standing and those born and brought up in India lack credibility. Thus it is every Nepali's birthright to form opinions on many language-related questions independently.

The fact that Sūryavikram's personal orthographic preferences never gained widespread acceptance has been interpreted by some as a victory for Pārasmaṇi. But this reduction of interpretation to personal rivalries obscures the overriding significance of such

debates: in fact, both parties were successful in their campaign to wrest control over language usage from an elite sanctioned by privilege and tradition. Regardless of whose proposals were ultimately adopted in specific areas, the site for contestations of linguistic authority had been transferred from the royal court to the realm of an independent, discursive sphere. That prominent activists then used the medium of journals to argue over particular propositions is indicative of the increasing assertiveness and self-assuredness of the public sphere. However, this transfer was not absolute, and there were ironies in the positions of Sūryavikram and Pārasmaṇi. Sūryavikram's article in the *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā* had in fact displaced one of Pārasmaṇi's which he had presented to the last annual meeting of the Sammelan. The latter then had his article published by Kathmandu's new journal *Śāradā* and ultimately joined forces with Nepal's official linguistic authority, the NBPS. When the third edition of his *Nepālī vyākaraṇ* was released in 1938 it had been updated to conform to the NBPS's grammatical and orthographic guidelines (Pradhan 1997: 46-47). While it was Sūryavikram who would, two decades later, move to Nepal and end up leading the Royal Nepal Academy, it was the resolutely Indian Nepali Pārasmaṇi who saw the practical advantages in aligning the twin forces of public critical approval and state power to advance a cause of standardisation which he saw as transcending national boundaries.

### **5.3. Siting Nepalliness: conceptions of the world, countries, states and citizens**

The adoption of generally acceptable names for language and people, and the struggle for standardisation, were only symptoms of a deeper and more difficult struggle to come to terms with the fundamental concepts underlying the construction of a consciously 'Nepali' society. In particular, the demarcation of Nepali society demanded the explicit creation of public space and a determination of its relationship to private, political and national realms. In other words, the process of discussing and refining a modern Nepali identity had to be sited in a conception of the world and the position within it of lands and states.

As Sūryavikram's words cited at the head of this chapter indicate ('... in our house, after that our *ṭol*, after that our village, after that our province, and after that in our country

and *jāti*'), Nepali society could be located somewhere along a loose continuum of family, local, geographical and ethnic categories. At one end of this scale early calls to a wide audience were often couched in kinship terms, especially that of brotherhood. Such invocation of a broad fraternity is in evidence from the time of *Chandra*: an editorial note (5: 24) refers to 'our country brothers (*deśī bhāiharū*)'; in a later issue Sūryyanārāyaṇ Pradhān (1915: 21) speaks of 'our Nepali brothers'. Such use of *bhāi* continued in *Chandrikā*, accompanied by *bāndhav*, meaning both 'brother' and 'friend'.<sup>290</sup> The term was frequently combined with the pluralising suffix *-gaṇ* ('group') and even more often prefixed with (*sva*)*deś* ('(one's own) country').<sup>291</sup> It was with a call to *deś bhāi* that Pārasmaṇi opened his welcome poem composed for the meeting that founded the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan (Pradhān 1991: 139, although the first words of his speech to the meeting were *hāmī nepālīharū*). Yet this intensity of rhetorical address had perhaps peaked in *Chandrikā*. The 'daughters' (Sukeśī 1914: 24) and 'dear younger sisters' (Devī 1915: 23) of the debate among women in *Chandra*'s pages did not lead to any sustained invocation of a Nepali sisterhood, although we should perhaps not assume that *bandhu* had exclusively male reference, rather that—as in the English of the period—the unreflective use of male terms could stand in stead of any gender-neutral invocation. This is the only way of explaining Devīprasād Sāpkoṭā's summary of Dharaṇīdhar's 'Udbodhan' (1920a: 4; emphasis added): 'Oh *deś bandhu!* ... women and youths (*strīyuvā*) all join

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<sup>290</sup> For example, Bhaṭṭa (1918: 11) talks of his fellow Nepalis as *bhāi haru* and also of 'brothers of western countries', Phattya (1918: 9) has 'our Gorkhali brothers', while in his important essay discussed in 4.4 Sūryavikram (1918: 19) refers to all Nepalis under the king as brothers, emphasising that Tarai inhabitants must also be included within the imagined family and be considered one's own brothers. This paternalistic role of the monarchy—enabling the sibling metaphor by providing a symbolic father to head the family—is addressed below (5.2.2).

Unlike in Hindi and Bengali, the Nepali *bhāi* (during this period almost always—as in Hindi—spelled *bhāi*: I have emended to the modern standard) strictly means 'younger brother': although writers may have been consciously patronising their readers (4.4.2), current usage would prefer *dājyū-bhāi* for a general invocation. *Bāndhav* has a wider reference, including elder and younger brothers and cousins on paternal and maternal sides; the connotation of 'friends' may have been influenced by Bengali, where *bandhu* (from which *bāndhav* is derived) is the standard word for 'friend'.

<sup>291</sup> Bhaṭṭa (1918: 11) employed *deśbāndhav haru* alongside the *bhāi haru* cited above; Mukhiyā (1918: 22) has 'our *deś bāndhavs*'; Sūryavikram (1918a: 3) appeals to 'priya *deś bāndhavgaṇ!*', as do both 'Ek *ṣudralekhak*' (1918: 4) and Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl (dedicating his Kathmandu-published *Rtuvichār* (1917: 1) to an audience that might be more specifically associated with the *deś* of Nepal); 'Sevak' (1918: 15) to 'he *bāndhavgaṇ!*', Maṇisimh Guruṇ (1918: 13) to 'he *deśbāndhavgaṇ!*', and Pārasmaṇi (C1(5): 6-7) to 'dear language enthusiasts, *svadeśbāndhavgaṇ!*'

together ...' Explicit reference to brothers and sisters together—such as Āryāl & Sedhāīm's (1917: advertisement) offer of service to *deś-bandhu* and *deś-bhaginī*—was rare (and in this case undermined by the fact that their notice was addressed to the doubly male-sounding *deśbāndhav vidyāpriyamahāśay*). Later Indian Nepali journals were generally content with social and ethnic interpretations of Nepaliness which did not need to be supported by the language of brotherhood.<sup>292</sup>

The initial dependence on kinship terminology as a means of understanding and addressing Nepali society reflected uncertainty as to the appropriate framework within which a wider community should be imagined. 5.5 examines the central concept of *jāti* which played a major role in providing such a framework; here we may note that any such imagining had to locate itself in a space between the individual and the whole world. The concentrated deployment of fraternity as a unifying bond allowed tentative progression away from the individual: *bhāi* and *bāndhavgaṇ* could claim to speak to all Nepalis while conceptually moving no further than Sūryavikram's 'house' and '*ṭol*'. Such discursive techniques allowed the potentially forbidding vastness of a public sphere defined only by a common linguistic medium to be tempered by a comforting vocabulary of family and domestic relationships, albeit one severely constrained by its almost exclusively male perspective. The brotherly language of early journals and its implicit equality of reference (3.1) provided at least a superficial representation of an implicit 'deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1991: 7).

However, it was necessary to imagine the world within which people could be divided into larger units based on geography or political and ethnic membership. Between the individual and the worldview was the space within which countries, societies, *jātis* could be constructed. In this context we may briefly examine Nepali writers' global perspectives, their interpretations of the world. One traditional philosophical strand contrasted the mortal

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<sup>292</sup> Reference in *Nebulā* (1(9): inside back) to 'some three million Nepali brothers and sisters (*dājyu bhāi, didī bahinī*) scattered and settled throughout India' is perhaps atypical for its time (1935). This is not to say that invocations of fraternity disappeared from discourse; indeed the formulation of 'respected sisters and brothers (*ādarāṇīya didī-bahinī dājyu-bhāi*)' has become the favoured opening for politicians' speeches (as, for example, in Prime Minister Lokendra Bahādur Chand's national address, Radio Nepal, February 3, 2003).

realm to the afterlife: *lok* and *paralok* as described by Sevak (1918: 15), while an anonymous author (C1(3): 4) reminded readers of humans' position in 'this impermanent earth (*anitya bhūmaṇḍal*)'. At the other end of the scale (of a range of vocabulary both larger and differently shaded to English) stood *jagat*, normally used to represent the globe as a physical entity, as in Śambhuprasād's *gazal* on bravery ('throughout the world (*jagat bhar*) they were able to hear of the glory of the brave Gorkhali', 1918a) or Tārānāth Śarmā's essay on science ('this whole world is full of science', 1918d).<sup>293</sup>

The most common colloquial word for 'world', the Arabic-origin *duniyām*, also features in written discourse. However, it bears a particular slant of meaning, of the 'world' conceived of as common people or society, but not specified as an individual, named *samāj*. A *Chandrikā* editorial (1(6): 23) spoke of the journal being 'of benefit to the world (*duniyā*)'; Ārjyāl (1918: 13) wrote of 'the world' being turned towards *vidyā*, and seeing 'the world engaged in the subject of the *unnati* of learning'; 'let us, the entire *duniñā*, promote learning' (C1(12): 11); the same sense is expressed by *Nebulā*'s description of Sardār Bahādur Lt. Govardhan Guruṅ (1(1): 9) as a man who has been engaged in 'any possible work for the benefit of the world (*duniyāmko bhalo hune*)'. However, it is *saṃsār* which provides the container within which all lesser social groupings are held. *Saṃsār* is interestingly—and conveniently for writers sheltering behind a degree of ambiguity—polyvalent: it could carry religious connotations, could frequently be used in the straightest sense of *jagat*, could convey the broadly social sense of *duniyām*, or allow for a metaphorical constructions.<sup>294</sup> Yet its most striking usage is as the universal category of

<sup>293</sup> The idea that *jagat* is entirely bereft of metaphysical significance is, however, unsustainable. Mukhiyā (1918: 22) lectures his readers that 'books are of three kinds: (1) made by god, (2) made by the *ṛṣis*, and (3) made by men. In the world (*jagat*) men have need of these three types of book' with the ambiguity that *jagat* could refer to the entire geographical world or to the mortal world. A more straightforward—but rarer—term is *viśva*, as in 'this world-wide (*viśvavyāpī*) war' (Jñavālī 1918: 2).

<sup>294</sup> Religious connotations: *saṃsār*'s basic meaning is the cycle of births or transmigration of the soul. Thus talk, for example, of abandoning 'worldly pleasures (*saṃsārik bhogvilās*)' and the 'self-satisfaction of the world (*saṃsār ko ātmasukh*)' (Jñavālī 1918: 7) conveys a preacher's contempt for mortal delights. Interestingly, Sāhā (Chaṭṭopādhyāya 1915: 103) uses *saṃsār* to translate the English 'nature' in one passage, perhaps emphasising the parallel cycles of nature and human life: 'this *saṃsār* ("Nature") does not stop moving in its own way and does not hide its form'. Equivalent to *jagat*: *Chandra* ((1): 2), *Lāmā* (1918: 10), *Āryāl* (1918: 8), *Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān* (1918: 2), *Jñavālī* (1918c: 17), C2(4): 116. Equivalent to *duniyām*: 'the world is doing this' (Jñavālī 1918: 4), 'the whole world is singing with an enchanted voice' (C1(11): 21). Metaphorical construction: the most elegant and relevant is Madan Thāpā's *sāmājīk saṃsār* ('social world', 1935: 30).

humankind which subsumes other divisions. Thus 'the great kings of the world' (Śreṣṭha 1918: 3-4), 'all the *jātis* of the world' (C1(12): 9), 'the people of the other societies of the world' and 'the advanced *jātis* of the world' (Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān 1930: 25, 26), 'in each *jāti* of the world' (Siṃh 1930: 38), 'how many *jātis* of the world are called advanced and civilised' (editorial, *Nebulā* 1(1): 4). Crucial in much Nepali writing about the world—whether implicit or explicit—was the position within it for Nepalis. Thus for Pārasmaṇi (1934: 29-30), if Nepalis responded to the call to assist their mother tongue then (and only then) 'we shall be able to walk in the *saṃsār* like others. We too shall be able to enter and take part in the battlefield that is this *saṃsār*.'

Somewhere between home and *saṃsār*, Nepali public discourse had to negotiate territories of nation, ethnicity and society. The process by which a Nepali public sphere was constructed within India had to reconcile an understanding of shared community feeling with the distinct and non-coterminous political entities within which it had to be fashioned. The starting point for this process was necessarily the establishment of a relationship with land and country, a relationship that could be extended to define the people it bound in contrast to those of other lands. This primal bond was expressed in various ways—such as Jñavālī's (1918: 17-18) 'intimate relationship with the country in whose climate your body was formed, with whose earth your mortal body mingles'—and afforded diverse means of identification with parallel identifiers such as *jāti* and *samāj*. It also enjoyed an ambivalent relationship with concepts of state, government and citizenship or subjecthood. The analysis of territorial conceptualisations must centre on contemporary interpretations of *deś* (country, land), *svadeś* and *videś* (one's own and another's country respectively) and their adjectival forms *svadeśī* and *videśī*. However, a more emotive term, *janmabhūmi* (birthland) provides a starting point. The Sanskrit *bhūmi* has a direct, almost tactile, reference to land as a physical presence: it speaks of the earth and soil, the element that is perhaps most inextricably linked to the lives of the hill farmers who formed the vast majority of Nepali society. Yet it also carries a religious significance which endows it with metaphysical power: thus can Banaras-based Paṇḍit Vāmdev Śarmā (1919: 88) speak of 'we Nepalis, people of a land of deliverance (*mokṣa bhūmi*)'. The land of one's birth could be invoked as an object of reverence and inherently deserving of service and sacrifice, as in

the first stanza of *Naivedya*'s 'Janmabhūmi' (Koirālā 1920a: 9): 'What is the holy place of pilgrimage? It is the birthland/Who are the objects of one's love? They are one's *deśbandhu*.' The opening of 'Deśbandhu sevā' (Koirālā 1920a: 11) suggests an even more direct—if grammatically tortuous—equivalence between land and people:

जन्मभूमिने देशबन्धु हो  
देशबन्धुनै जन्मभूमि हुन् ।  
जन्मभूमिके प्रेमले गरी  
देशबन्धुमा स्नेह हुन्छ त्यो ॥

The *janmabhūmi* is indeed the *deśbandhu*;  
The *deśbandhu* are indeed the *janmabhūmi*.  
It is through the love of the *janmabhūmi*  
That the *deśbandhu* have within them that  
love.

This view was not in any way unique to Nepalis, rather it was founded in Hindu tradition and had its modern relevance underlined by the progress of other Indian communities. Thus a report on the Nepali singer Ustād Gaṇeś Bahādur's songs praising 'our mother the birthland (*jananī janmabhūmi*)' reminded readers of the Sanskrit proverb 'mother and birthland are dearer than heaven' (C1(6): 20). Contemporary paragons of devotion included the influential Bengali novelist Bāṅkimchandra Chāṭṭopādhyāy, admired by Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (1918: 11) as much for being a 'true servant of his birthland' as for his literary prowess.

The anonymous author of an essay in *Chandrikā* entitled 'The importance of birthland' brings us to the heart of the emotional and symbolic entanglement around *janmabhūmi*. The link of birthplace to motherhood is made explicit (1(3): 6): 'as the mother tongue is the only elegant, sweet language of the motherland, the supreme duty and *dharma* of the living beings of this world is indeed to love and honour one's own language and birthland as much as possible'. Indeed, the writer has already gone to some lengths (*ibid.*: 5) to praise the Sanskrit word for 'mother', *mātā*, and to emphasise that nothing in the world is more important than mother and motherhood. Land is tied to language with an assumption that any person has only one of each, and that each is dependent on the other, an assumption that allows a straightforward emotive appeal but which cannot neatly be applied to a diverse Nepali society. Throughout the essay the paramount importance of one's *janmabhūmi* and language is repeatedly emphasised.<sup>295</sup> Yet the question of what exactly *janmabhūmi* here

<sup>295</sup> For example, the author cites Sir Walter Scott on patriotism to reinforce the point, and as further evidence adduces the bizarre tale of a pet parrot born in Spain who was taken to live abroad. On being

refers to, which actual geographical areas are encompassed by the impassioned rhetorical claim, is not answered. Indeed, the waters are further muddied by repeated initial references to 'service of one's own country' (mentioned at least three times on the first page) with the clear implication that this is equivalent to serving the *janmabhūmi*. The author, however, is speaking of India as the country but addressing Nepalis as the servants of motherland. So what did Nepalis of this period consider as their country?

In his much-cited article 'The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal' (1984), Richard Burghart offers a concise yet apparently comprehensive analysis of conceptual developments in governmental discourse that ultimately led to Panchayat era nationalism. Central to his argument (1984: 103) is an assessment of different models of nationhood based upon, broadly speaking, landlord-tenant relations, spiritual authority and environmental or biological criteria:

The Gorkha rulers, like many of their counterparts in the Ganges basin, claimed their sovereignty by exercising proprietary authority upon their possessions (*muluk*), and ritual authority within their realm (*deśa*). Included within their possessions and realm were various countries (also *deśa* or *des*) in which the king's tenants or subjects were natives who claimed certain rights to their land and way of life on the basis of ancestral authority.

He offers a more specific definition of the way in which fellow inhabitants of a single *deśa* or *des* share cultural traits.<sup>296</sup> His elegant and persuasive argument hinges around two central processes in a chain of six: 'interpretation of country in terms of species (c. 1860)' and 'designation of Nepali as official language of Nepal (c. 1930)'.<sup>297</sup> The issues

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addressed by someone in Spanish it danced in its cage then promptly dropped dead (*ibid.*: 6): 'Aha! Such passion for the birthland even in a mere bird!! Wonderful!!!'. The concluding paragraph speaks repeatedly of 'service to the birthland' and 'protecting one's motherland'.

<sup>296</sup> 'The term *deśa*, or *des*, also means country, and, by implication, a unique people who experience a common moral and natural identity by virtue of their living and interacting in the same region. People of the same country often speak a common language, share a common lore (of proverbs, stories and songs), and observe certain customary practices (*desāchār*) that are objectified as the way of life of their country (*des dharma*).' (1984: 106)

<sup>297</sup> For the sake of completeness we may note the first two steps (demarcation of a defined border (1816), overlapping of the boundary of the realm with the boundary of the possessions (c.1860)) and last two (implicit differentiation of the kingship from the state (c. 1960), formation of a culturally unique polity (c. 1960)). He identifies the differentiation of kingship in terms reminiscent of Habermas's analysis (1989: 12) of similar processes in Europe: 'The first visible mark of the analogous polarization of princely authority was the separation of the public budget from the territorial ruler's private holdings. The bureaucracy, the military (and to some extent also the administration of justice) became independent institutions of public authority separate from the progressively privatized sphere of the court.'

considered in this chapter approximate both to the theme and period of Burghart's stages but they suggest different conclusions. We have already observed (5.2.1) that the 'designation of Nepali' was not as simple a step as Burghart implies; similarly the 'interpretation of country' does not lend itself to as convenient an explanation as his article suggests. Its stated aim (*ibid.*: 104) was 'to consider how ... the idea of the nation-state took root in the governmental discourse of Nepal' and the well-structured argument it presented has since proved enduringly persuasive to almost all scholars of Nepal, perhaps especially those writing in English. Yet, even judged against its own purpose, it displays fundamental weaknesses: the 'discourse' it seeks to analyse is never addressed in any detail (rather conclusions are drawn from disappointingly vague readings of secondary sources) and, remarkably given the semantic attention devoted to separating strands of meaning in terms such as *deś*, it never even mentions the two words which came to represent most closely the components of 'nation' and 'state', *jāti* and *rāṣṭra*. Moreover, there is no suggestion that the origin of the concept of nation-state might be located not in governmental discourse but in the public realm, as this thesis contends.<sup>298</sup> The question of nationhood is considered below (5.3); consideration of countries and states presented here opens lines of enquiry that may usefully supplement or revise Burghart's hypothesis.

The correlation of 'country' with polity is not straightforward; the ease with which it is now achieved in Nepali may owe more to twentieth century importation of alien terminology than to a historical reconciliation of traditional categories. Usage of *deś* and related terms in public discourse can guide us through the potential maze of popular understandings of statehood. Certainly the founders of *Chandra* ((1): 1) had adopted *deś* as a category which enabled the equation of India with other states: thus references to speakers of 'the languages of this country' can be contrasted to 'the residents of other countries such as the English, French, Germans, etc.' Similarly, Śeṣ Maṇi (1918: 16) made use of *deś* as a unit for comparison of progress towards *unnati*: 'in whichever country... in that country'; the Secretary of the Kurseong Gorkha Library followed suit with 'in this country... in

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<sup>298</sup> These weaknesses are also evident in Burghart's later article on the political culture of Panchayat democracy, which includes the bizarre contention that *sarkārī* corresponds to 'the European word public' (2001: 7).

whichever country one looks' (C1(1): 18); Śrīmatī Kumudīnī wrote of 'home and abroad (*deś deśāntarmā*)' (1918: 12) while Tārānāth Śarmā (1918: 17) looked to the economic development of England, America and Japan and drew on the experience of 'every advanced country'; similar usage could still be seen more than a decade later (e.g. Sijāpati 1935: 2, 4). So far, so good: we see *deś* adopted in discourse as a broad equivalent of 'nation-state', describing discrete, geographically bounded political units populated by supposedly similar groups of people who shared a named language and nationality.

Yet it is hard not to see here the influence of the European nation-state imposing itself on such imaginings, Nepali usage of *deś* simply translating the English concept and crudely applying it to local realities. In fact, the traditional state is better described by *rājya* whereas *deś* carries a broader range of reference. When Pārasmaṇi called out to *svadeśbāndhavaṅ* he was appealing to a group that shared a sense of commonality not derived from joint membership of a single political unit but rather of one *deś* as an imagined homeland: a homeland that might have been historically and emotionally centred on the Kathmandu valley and the mid-Himalayan foothills but which could readily include more far-flung sons and daughters. The condition of membership was the ability and willingness to conceive of oneself as a part of this imagined community: if one's *mātrbhūmi* is Darjeeling and one's *mātrbhāṣā* Nepali, then surely one can be a *svadeśbandhu* regardless of citizenship? To this extent *deś* retains the sense of Burghart's *des* but is far from coterminous with the modern concept of statehood. The limits of such an imagined community were demarcated as much by a clear awareness of the otherness of foreign lands and peoples as by any homogeneity of Nepali ancestry or culture. Indeed, from the frequency with which writers juxtapose reference to one's own country with the contrast of 'abroad' one might conclude that *deś* could only gain meaning by a process of dissociation. Thus *svadeś* and *svadeśī* are conditioned by their opposition to *videś* and *videśī*, a classic deployment of alterity to sharpen the definition of one's own community. Yet while *deś* distinctly refers to the state of Nepal when it is used to describe the economic necessity of excluding foreign goods, its general usage does not correspond to a precisely bounded political unit.<sup>299</sup>

<sup>299</sup> Indeed, *deś* alone can even take on the meaning of a foreign land, specifically India (cf. fn. 80). Such usage is treated by Śamśer in his dictionary of Nepali phrases (1941/42) as standard: he includes

In other words, we must look to other terminology for more specific definitions of states by examining how Nepali writers dealt with concepts of government, territory, statehood and citizenship. However, we can start with one welcome area of relative clarity, that of naming the state of Nepal. It is interesting to note that the variety of appellations for the Nepali language and people stands in contrast to largely consistent naming of the political entity as 'Nepal'.<sup>300</sup> At least two journals published in India—*Chandrikā* and *Nebulā*—maintained 'news from Nepal' sections. One ambiguity, however, is that 'Nepal' was also traditionally employed for the Kathmandu valley alone (e.g. Śarmā Āryāl 1915: 4), as Jñavālī (1918b) and Upretī (1919: 103) explain). It is worth noting that Jñavālī's analysis (examined in 5.3) implied a distinct mental disjunction between the commonly imagined Nepal (basically Kathmandu) and the actual territorial extent of the nation, including its various peoples. We must also disentangle a web of overlapping terminology which illuminates the multiple categories comprehended by Nepali statehood. For example, Satyāl entitled his verse sketch of Nepal (1921: 7-12) 'A concise description of our Gorkhā government's independent state (*rājya*), the country of Nepal'. Such multiplicity of identifications was also a feature of official discourse, exemplified by the government's own legal handbook, *Gorakhā-adālatī-śikṣā* (Āchārya Dīkṣit 1922/23b).<sup>301</sup> The first volume's introduction speaks both of 'our Nepal' (*ibid.*: i) and 'all the Gorkhali subjects' (*ibid.*: iii), while reference to 'the subject-loving lord, the *sarkār* of Nepal' (*ibid.*: iii) is

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*deś lāgnu* 'to head for the *deś*' with the definition 'to go and settle abroad (in our language *deś* standing alone, unqualified by adjective, pronoun, etc. means "abroad"). [For example] "one can't find work here, it will be necessary to head abroad (*deś lāgnuparyo*)"'. For the related adjectival noun *deśī*, the Royal Nepal Academy's dictionary gives 'a person who has returned from living or working abroad; a *lāhure*' (Pokharel 1983/84: 669). Turner (1931: 319) gives 'Country; the Plains of India' and 'Native; belonging to the Plains' for noun and adjective respectively. This usage is specific to Nepali, reflecting historical patterns of migration and labour, and is thus not present in Hindi *deś* or *deśī* (cf. McGregor 1993: 511-12). We may also compare Burghart (1984: 106): 'the use of the term *deśa* in Hill speech to denote the plains of present-day India implied that the Hills were the *pradeśa* of a central authority situated in the Ganges basin'.

<sup>300</sup> For example in Sāpkoṭā (1915: 14), *Chandra* ((10): 22), C1(3): 26, Kumudinī (1918: 11), Ārjyāl (1918: 13), Dhunḡyāl (1918e: 15), Śarmā (1919: 88), *Ādarsa* (1(3): 45). I can only cite one instance where 'Nepal' is deliberately avoided: the opening line and chorus of Phaṇī's poem 'Mero deś' (1919) is 'my Gorkha, my country'.

<sup>301</sup> The top of each volume's title page bears a similar heading to that of Āchārya Dīkṣit (1922/23a) cited in 5.2.1: 'Nepal, Gorkha-capital, Gorkha Education Promotion Department (*nepāl, gorakhā-rājdhānī, gorakhā-śikṣāprachārak-vibhāg*)'.

balanced by the opening line of the first chapter, which introduces 'the legal rules of our Gorkha *sarkār*'. Despite the confusing agglomeration of categories, one can extract from Satyāl the clear implication that 'Gorkha' attaches itself primarily to the ruler of the country while 'Nepal' indicates the territorial basis of the state, an interpretation that (given the ambiguity of *sarkār*, discussed below) is not contradicted by the superficially conflicting terminology of the *Gorakhā-adālatī-sikṣā*. This interpretation was also reflected in Nepal's national anthem until 1967, in the form of 'may we Gorkhalis always maintain the Lord's command over Nepal' (Gellner, cited in Whelpton 1991: 32).

The technical vocabulary of statehood exhibits further complications. While today the clear translation of the English 'state' is *rāṣṭra*, this word was a relatively late entrant into Nepali discourse. Early usage of *rāṣṭra* was restricted to specific contexts, for example language (*rāṣṭrabhāṣā* can be found in Āryāl (1915: 7), Ārjyāl (1918: 15), Upretī (1919: 106); though it was not always strictly limited to the nation of Nepal but could be used loosely of the Himalayan region), or to translate the 'League of Nations' (*rāṣṭra-saṃgha*, *Nebulā* 1(2): 1). Perhaps one of the earliest neutral usages of *rāṣṭra* can be found in *Nebulā* (1(9): 2), but even here it stands in a complicated relationship to other formations: the constitution (*saṃgaṭhan*) of *jāti*, society and also *rāṣṭra*. Turner (1931) has no entry for *rāṣṭra* or any associated forms (though in general his inclusion of high register Sanskrit items is patchy: for example, he also omits *sāhitya* and *sammelan*). We may also note the absence in this period of other current standard terminology such as *nāgarik* ('citizen'), *nāgarikatā* ('citizenship'), and *rāṣṭriyatā* ('nationality').

The general preference is for *rājya* but this term carried several potential referents, all of which can be seen in *Chandra* and *Chandrikā*: it could stand for the British state as an entity defined by the extent of its rulers' possessions ('aṃgrejī rājya', *Chandra* (1): 3), and similarly the Nepalese state ('the whole rājya of the Nepal government', C1(7): 17);<sup>302</sup> it could describe the process or condition of ruling (thus *su-rājya* under George V, *Chandra* (5): 9), where it overlaps with the etymologically identical *rāj* (e.g. 'nepālī rāj', *Chandra*

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<sup>302</sup> This is certainly the dominant usage: 'the great and small [people] of the rājya' (Upretī 1919: 108), 'within the Nepal rājya' (*Nebulā* 1(1): 9), 'separate, neighbouring rājyas such as Nepal, Sikkim and Bhoṭ ... the British, Sikkim and Bhutan, these three rājyas' (Thāpā 1935: 30, 31), 'the famous poet Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl of the nepāl rājya' (Pradhān & Pradhān 1928: vi-vii).

(1): 3); it could also refer to princely states (e.g. 'rājya baḍaudā', C1(1): 23) which clearly did not enjoy an equivalent status with the British *rājya*. Meanwhile, *rājya* in the sense of state was interchangeable with other terms, such as *muluk* (e.g. 'unnati of education in the *nepāl rājya* ... there was absence of education in the *nepāl muluk*', C1(10): inside frontispiece), and *sarkār* (e.g. 'our *nepāl rājya* ... the British *sarkār bahādur* ... both *rājyas*', C1(11): 21). Burghart's interpretation of *muluk* as the 'possessions' of a ruler (1984: 103-04) probably accords too much significance to the original Arabic meaning of the word; *muluk* is often used simply as a synonym for 'country' or can represent a habitat or traditional ethnic/geographical homeland, as for the Lepchas who might say of Darjeeling 'this is in fact *our muluk*' (*Nebulā* 1(2): 26). This seems also to be the sense of other references in *Nebulā*: 'the *muluk* of us Nepalis is Nepal' (*Nebulā* 1(2): 41), a raffle on behalf of Kalimpong Town Day and Night School had encouraged 'our hill-dwellers (*pahādbāsīharū*)' to see 'this *muluk*'s rupees used in this *muluk*'s *dharma* and work' (*Nebulā* 1(9): 10). The latter instance in particular demonstrates that *muluk* need bear no connotations of either lordly possession or independent political status.

Still, it would be false to claim that there was not a reasonably well developed awareness of Nepal's sovereignty and independence as a political unit distinct from British India and the princely states. Even before the start of the period covered by this thesis, an English primer for Nepali students communicated these messages in its sample phrases: 'Nepal is an independent kingdom (*nepāl ko rāj svādhīn chha*) ... No one can enter Nepal without a passport' (Dravid 1911: 3, 29).<sup>303</sup> Elsewhere one finds occasional specific references to Nepal's independence (e.g. 'the independent *rājya nepāl* and the Nepali *jāti*', *Ādarśa* 1(7-8): 104-05), and even to Nepal's 'empire' ('the Gorkha language has been much promoted within the Nepal empire (*sāmrājya*)', C1(10): 15), a phrase which was certainly appropriate at the fullest extent of the Gorkha conquests but which seems out of place by the twentieth century: by this time it was the British who possessed the noteworthy empire (e.g. 'the British empire ... the strong empire', *Nebulā* 1(4): 1). Of course, this

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<sup>303</sup> This textbook also offered some of the other interpretations of 'Nepal' and 'Nepali' mentioned above: 'We can reach Nepal in eight days' (Dravid 1911: 6) presumably refers just to Kathmandu, while 'This is Nepali song' (*ibid.*: 13) emphasises language or culture over political geography.

reduced many territories to colonies, but the Nepali term for colony (*upaniveś*) sees little usage (a rare example is at C1(8): 9). Meanwhile the quest of some activists for self-rule within the British empire led to more lexical contortions ('*svarājya* within the British *sāmrājya*', C1(3): 2).

Thus one can conclude that while Nepali had not developed a completely discrete term for 'state'—and certainly not for 'nation-state'—it was capable of expressing the concept of a territory defined by its existence as a political unit within defined borders.<sup>304</sup> Nepali writers also had little trouble in dealing with rulers<sup>305</sup> and governments.<sup>306</sup> It is in the relationship between governing and governed—for example, in the simple correlation of 'the *unnati* of *sarkār* and *prajā*' (C1(10): 14)—that we encounter conceptual difficulties. For the relative ease of expression in terms of state and country does not translate to a parallel clarity of understanding in reference to citizens, subjects, residents of inhabitants. The search for precision in this area is particularly relevant to the Nepali public sphere's gradual adoption of political characteristics and engagement with the language of rights and entitlements, as in its struggle to give status to the Nepali language.

Here the relationship of people to a land was initially more likely to be expressed in terms of residence in a particular geographical setting or link to a *deś* rather than a *rājya* or *rāṣṭra*. Thus early writers often prefer to link peoples to lands in terms of inhabitation: the English, French, Germans, etc. are simply 'those living in other lands (*anya deś kā basne*

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<sup>304</sup> Indeed, at least one reference to migration between states equates a traditional emotional territorial category (*mātrbhūmi*) with the modern political sense of *rājya*: 'Gorkhalis kicking their *mātrbhūmi* and coming to a different state (*par rājya*)' (C1(1): 23).

<sup>305</sup> Generally in flattering terms: thus George is *mahāmānya nareś jārij* (*Chandra* (5): 9), Chandra Śamśer is *nepāl rājyakā bhāgya vidhātā, prajāvatsal*, etc., etc. (C1(12): frontispiece). Again, the exact position of the king in relation to society and polity is not always clear: one formulation (C2(4): 116) gets round this by using a list: 'by promoting learning in society to spread the glory of *jāti, deś* and *rājā*'. Meanwhile, confusion persisted into the 1930s as to whether the Nepalese king should be identified with Gorkha or Nepal. Thus 'under the Gorkhali *rājā*' and 'Victory to the *mahārāj* of Nepal' both appear in a single issue of *Nebulā* (1(2): 27, 40).

<sup>306</sup> The use of *sarkār* is relatively unproblematic, for example as 'our *sarkār*' (C1(7): 10 & 11, 1(10): 13), 'the British and the Nepal *sarkār*' (C2(4): 116). However, there is one inherent ambiguity: *sarkār* (a Farsi word) traditionally refers to an individual lord or master; the sense of government as collective institution comes later. Thus Ārjyāl (1918: 15) directly equates *rājā* with *sarkār*. Only in *Nebulā* (1(4): 1, 2) have I seen this distinction between ruler and government made explicit (and this in the context of British India): 'living under the umbrella of the subject-loving Emperor's government' and 'the Emperor, Empress, and their government'.

*harū*)' (*Chandra* (1): 1). Nepalis in India are also generally identified simply by the location of their current residence, for example 'all Gorkhalis living in Mugalan' (C1(1): 24). At least one later reference (*Nebulā* 1(2): 31) explicitly contrasts immigrants and original inhabitants, prefiguring later discourse on indigenous peoples: 'Migrant (*pravāsī*) Nepalis ... can be seen to have filled all the slopes of the Himalaya ... whereas one's own original people (*āphnā khud ādi nivāsī prajā*) ...'. People may then be tied to a narrow locality—such as 'the inhabitants (*adhibāsī*) of Sirāhā', (C1(5): 20)—or to a more widely envisaged *deś*—e.g. 'inhabitants (*nivāsī*) of the *deś* of Nepal' (C1(6): 20), 'the *unnati* of our *deś*-residing (*deśvāsī*) rich people' (C1(8): 2)—by virtue of residence rather than ethnic or political belonging.<sup>307</sup> This is clearly a most convenient way of addressing the competing claims among Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas to 'nativeness' in the Darjeeling area. On three occasions, one issue of the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat* (28(9): 68) refers simply to the 'inhabitants of the hills' (*pahāḍ nivāsīharū*), a phrase which avoids confronting potentially awkward issues. This three-birds-with-one-stone approach became standard usage in the Darjeeling area journals *Ādarśa* and *Nebulā*, which latter's specific aim was the fostering of harmony between the hill communities (4.3.3).

While appeals to fraternity may have declined (cf. 5.2), traditional language of subjecthood rather than citizenship continued to hint at genetic relationships—the most common word for 'subject', *prajā*, literally means 'offspring'—and a kinship-based construction of the state, with the king-subject relationship implicitly or explicitly conceived as paternal-filial. Such a conceptualisation recurs throughout Ārjyāl's essay 'Unnati', for example (1918: 15) 'the king and all classes of *prajā* must be united ... we *prajā* must also devote body, mind and wealth to the king's work and bring about the *unnati* of the king. If the king and *prajā* are not united in a bond like that of father and son (*pitā putrako sambandha jasato*) then it is pointless for us to hope that we may do this or that.' Brotherhood can be allied to shared kinship in the *prajā*, a term which is perhaps not limited to an expression of subjecthood but can imply ethnic or national belonging.<sup>308</sup>

<sup>307</sup> Even today, national addresses by King or Prime Minister in Nepal are generally made in the name of *deśvāsī* ('*deśvāsīko nāmmā sambodhan*') rather than subjects or citizens.

<sup>308</sup> Examples of *prajā*'s usage in *Chandrikā* can be found at C1(3): 2, C1(9): 28, C1(10): inside frontispiece, C1(10): 13, C1(10): 13, C1(11): 21, C2(3): 88. Three references to *gorkhā prajā* and

Occasional references to 'ryots' also recall a traditional landlord-tenant basis to citizenship.<sup>309</sup>

Modern conceptions of nationality, according to which citizens were bound to countries and governments in standard relationships, were challenged by ethnic exclusivity within Nepal's social and political structures, especially by the fact that Nepaliness was largely Kathmandu-oriented, and based on a narrow *parbatīya* outlook. The practical and intellectual problems of hill and Tarai identity, and their relationship to Nepali unity and shared membership of a single polity, were addressed by Sūryavikram in a fascinating essay (with the provocative title 'What is "Nepal"?'). His starting point was the comment a friend had recently made to him that Nepal was the four passes (in other words just the Kathmandu valley). He realised (1918b: 17) that his friend's observation was what most Nepalis would say:

And indeed why should this not be so?... If one writes 'Nepal' on the envelope of a letter it reaches Kathmandu and does not go to the 'Nayā Muluk' or Dhankuṭa. If someone asks where your house is and you give the answer 'Nepal' the questioner understands that it is within the four passes. Also if a *madise* says that Nepal is a great *deś* one understands that he is speaking of the city that he saw when visiting Paśupatiṅgā on Śivarātrī.

But Sūryavikram was not satisfied with this popular usage and emphasised that he understood Nepal in terms of a united territory under a single political system (*ibid.*): 'But readers! My Nepal is great. The whole state of the government of Nepal is my Nepal. If I write or speak of Nepal please be generous and understand that I mean the entire state of Nepal (*samasta nepāl rājya*).' This was not just a statement about his acceptance of modern concepts of nationhood but an expression of his concern with the parochial, Kathmandu-centric worldview which underlay popular usage. Despite his Banaras upbringing (and the likely Indian residence of many of his readers), his 'we' implied that prejudice against Nepalis from beyond the Valley had infected all participants in the

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*hāmī gorkhā prajā* made in the context of the KGL (C1(1): 18) demonstrate that it was not necessarily tied to allegiance to the king of Nepal (although Nepalis in India did generally continue to respect, and praise, Nepal's kings and Prime Ministers).

<sup>309</sup> For example, *raitīko suvistā* (C2(4): 109) and Sūryavikram's 'the Tarai's own *raitī*' (1918b: 18). He seems at one point (*ibid.*) to equate *prajā* with *raitī* ('apart from us *prajā* of Kathmandu, other *raitīs*...') but he may be making a careful distinction between those whose membership of the state is based on ancestry and those who are entitled to admission because they cultivate lands falling within national boundaries.

discourse of Nepaliness. Indeed, he implied (*ibid.*: 18) that usage of 'we' had been contaminated by narrow-mindedness:

Because on the subject of Nepal this miserable attitude has arisen thousands of sins are being committed by our hands today. We insult the Tarai's own inhabitants (*tarāiko āphno raitī*) by calling them 'madise'... Oh fate! If it were not for these *madises*, Tarai, *prades* and hills we would not have rice-water in our mouths and we would not be able to be Nepali (*hāmī nepālī hunai pāune thīyenaum*)... here are the hills and without them how would our brothers join the British army fed on ghee and milk to perform all sorts of brave feats and have the world call us brave Gorkhas? If only out of this sense of self-interest we should be grateful for the *madise*, Tarai and hills but we do not even have that in us ... are we now beasts or men?<sup>310</sup>

For this, Sūryavikram (*ibid.*: 19) proposed a seemingly simple solution, and a solution which implied that common citizenship itself could equate to a pseudo-familial relationship: 'We have within us the medicine for this [disease]; we who live beneath the umbrella of His Majesty's government are all brothers. We are one. As soon as we decide that there is no difference between us that disease will disappear.' Yet the very terms in which he couched his passionate plea for greater respect and inclusion of *madises* served to reinforce their separation from 'we Nepalis':

There is no difference between the *madise* and us Nepalis. Do we imagine ourselves to be greater because we wear *suruvāl* and he wears a *dhotī*? Just because we know trickery while he is simple does that mean we can treat him as we wish? For that reason we Nepalis must know our *raitī madise* to be our brother. Even if the Tarai and the hills are not nice we must say that they are our country, we must bring about *unnati* of the *madise*.

It was not until the publication of *Ādarśa* (1(1): 1, 2) that the potentially more egalitarian (*nepālī janatā* ('people, populace')) made an appearance, a phrase that was also employed by Hariprasād Pradhān (1935: 72) as he urged his *jāti*-members on to language-service (cf. 4.2). If Nepali discourse had managed to incorporate and define some elements of the modern state, there remained obvious questions over the basis for individual membership in the state. Residence, land cultivation and ancestry provided some of the

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<sup>310</sup> He is unsparing in his criticism (*ibid.*: 18-19), and his samples of everyday prejudice are revealing: 'Through our meanness we call subjects (*raitī*) other than us Nepalis of Kathmandu (*kāḥmādaumkā nepālī prajā*) uncivilised Tharus (*jaṅgalī thāru*). Through our stupidity we do not understand the usefulness and greatness of the Tarai and the hills and we denigrate them. Through our wickedness (*duṣṭatā*) we always seek to oppress the *madises* and do not allow them to be equal to us.' In the early twentieth century the government office at Kumārī Chok in Kathmandu (which was feared among government servants as it dealt with their accounts and punished irregularities) was divided into three sections: 'Madhes', 'Pahād', and 'Nepāl' (Basnet 1986/87: 9).

competing bases for claims, alongside a vague sense of belonging in a traditional habitat or homeland.

#### 5.4. Hinduism, hierarchy and the brave nation

धर्म प्राण विशुद्ध हिन्दुहरूको सद्गर्भको आश्रय  
विश्वव्याप्त विवेकनिष्ठ मतिमान् श्रीसूर्यविशोदय  
वीर क्षत्रियको सुशासन जहाँ सौभाग्य रेखा सरो  
देखी भन्दछ लोक "शक्ति छ ठुलो नेपालमा ऐश्वरी" ॥

*The refuge of the true dharma of Hindus  
pure in a life of dharma, where the line of  
good fortune has moved under the good  
rule of brave Kṣatriyas arisen from the  
line of Śrī Sūrya, world-renowned,  
discerning and intelligent; seeing this  
people say 'Nepal has great power and  
majesty'.*

Lekhanāth Pauḍyāl, 'Nepāl' (1935)

As the second and final verse of Pauḍyāl's paean to his homeland indicates, religious virtue had for some writers come to be synonymous with Nepal and Nepalis' self-image. His celebration of its unsullied *hindūtvā* recalls Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ's original motive for defending the Himalayan foothills against the advancing British aggressors: to make Nepal a 'true Hindustan'. Just as Hinduism provided the ideological basis for a traditional polity headed by a religious monarch, so it supplied the fundamental unifying principle for an articulated sense of Nepali identity. In a brief study of three models of the relationship between culture and political incorporation in Nepal (hierarchical and caste-based Rāṇā rule, the developmental and culturally homogenising Panchayat period, and the multicultural diversity model proposed by contemporary ethnic activists) Gellner (2001: 193) observed that 'in all three models, the position of Hinduism, and the relation of other religious traditions to it, is central'. The period and mode of social organisation under discussion here forms an interesting counterpoint to these three models. Chronologically falling between the foundation of the Rāṇā period and before the Panchayat period, it examines the deployment of Hinduism as a legitimating and organising factor within public, non-state discourse.

While the basis of *jāti* membership and the inclusion of diverse communities within the ambit of a single Nepali society prompted much discussion (5.5), there was almost no questioning in public discourse of the consistent identification of Nepal and Nepalis with Hinduism. We observed in the previous section Sūryavikram's rationalisation of the need

for Nepali social unity on a national basis. Yet his own exclusive sense of membership of the Nepali community was repeatedly betrayed by his language. It is clear throughout the essay (Jñavālī 1918b) that much as Sūryavikram argued passionately for equality in citizenship and the abandonment of prejudice, he is not proposing to open the doors of Nepaliness to admit *madises* and the people of the further hills: for him, 'we' remain 'we' and 'they' remain 'they', however much one may strive to be more polite. His final appeal (*ibid.*: 19) was thus almost self-contradictory: 'We must make the Tarai and the hills good. This is our *dharma*. This is our *karma*. We are the children of *ṛṣis*. We are Hindus. We are not children. So why can we not abandon our narrow views?' Once again, the language in which his appeal for broad-mindedness is couched reflects a narrow religious exclusivity, whereby the leaders of society and gatekeepers of Nepaliness remained the 'children of *ṛṣis*'. Dharaṇīdhar (1934: 11) similarly could not resist on occasion implying that Nepalis consisted entirely of Hindus of Indian origin, the Nepali *jāti* having 'entered to take refuge in Dhāvalagiri Himālaya solely to protect its *dharma* ... the main purpose of entering the hills was to preserve our *dharma*'. When Sūryavikram later made a useful study of Sanskrit literary evidence for the origins of the name 'Nepal' he managed to steer his conclusion (Jñavālī 1935a: 55) towards a conclusion redolent of this period's nascent *hindūtvā*: 'From this concise exposition one gains the impression that Nepal has occupied an honourable place in the history of India for even more than two thousand years ago. Possessed of this ancient history, our Nepal is also today celebrated as the only independent Hindu state in the whole world.'

The roots of a forcefully Hindu *Weltanschauung* considerably predated the arrival of Nepali print discourse and permeated it from its earliest stages. We have already observed in Chapter 2 that the Nepali popular publishing business was almost entirely in the hands of Brāhmaṇs, while Chapter 3 has examined both the religious inspiration behind some calls for social reform (3.4.1) and the subjection of the literary sphere to a strictly normative approach to private and public morality (3.4.2). That Hinduism was a recurrent theme in discourse—and an entirely dominant theme with the exception of Christians led by Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān and some Buddhist writers—does not require further demonstration here. Of concern is rather the way in which a Hindu outlook coloured the process of Nepali

community definition, and how it relates to subsequent theorisations of Nepali identity and nationhood. In relation to social structure, Hinduism not only provided a hierarchical framework with which to rationalise a complex society (as Nepal's *Mulukī Ain* had attempted in 1854) but a set of values by which relations between *jātis* could be judged. Thus *Medinī Prasād Upretī's* essay on the subject of Nepal included a section on the country's history which gave a highly Hinduised and glorified account of *Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ* and his brave *Chhetrī* hordes, adducing various types of 'proof' that Nepali *Bāhuns* are originally from *Kaśhī* and *Chhetrīs* are original *Rajputs* (1919: 105): 'If that were not the case then the importance of the Hindu *dharma* and *Brāhmaṇ* and *Kṣatriyas'* prestige would not be seen in Nepal. Through this *Gorkha jāti* many savage (*jaṅgalī*) *jātis* and followers of Buddhism have also come within the Hindu *dharma*.'<sup>311</sup> *Upretī* was only a student when he wrote this essay: rather than detracting from its worth this suggests that it is more an indication of received values than the personal assessment of a mature essayist. And it was passed for publication by *Pārasmaṇi*, whose own clashes with *Gaṅgaprasād Pradhān* and anti-missionary position can be seen as contributing to the cultural construction of a pure Hindu Nepali identity (cf. *Onta* 1996a: 68 and 5.2.2).

*Chandrikā*, like other journals, was always willing to give space to the promotion of *sanātana* Hinduism, be it in the form of translated essays such as *Baṅkimchandra's* on 'Purity of the mind' (which is 'the essence of the Hindu *dharma*'; 1(4): 2) or contributions such as the *Bombay Gorkhā Grantha Prachārak Maṇḍalī's* lengthy essay on the technicalities of 'Samvatsarapatipadā' (carried over from 1(5) to 1(6)). Religious reform, however, apart from featuring in the odd stray reference (such as the *dharmonnati* mentioned in 1(12): 3) was not a prominent topic in mainstream print discourse. Activists such as *Śukrarāj Śāstrī* tended to plough more independent furrows while most writers

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<sup>311</sup> He did qualify his comments with an explicit recognition of Nepal's diversity and the fact that Hinduism was not the sole religion (1919: 106): 'There are many *jātis* in Nepal. The *dharma* is mainly Hindu *dharma*.' The mutability of religious identification was also used in a political context: emphasising the fundamental unity of *Darjeeling's* hill peoples in his speech at the founding of the *HPSU* (*Nebulā* 1(2): 27), *J. Pāval* claimed that the three communities were brothers, common offspring of the Himalaya, and 'from the point of view of religion too, all three brothers are Buddhist. Most Nepalis observe the Hindi *dharma* since coming under the *Gorkhali* kings but still they were previously Buddhist.'

were happy to leave the bases of belief and practice unquestioned. For Dharañīdhar the Hindu 'we' (*hāmī hindūharū*; 1919: 61) was an unproblematic assumption, while for Sūryavikram (1919b: 91) it was also an unchallengeable component of culture: 'if we accept our own civilisation, *dharma*, behaviour and views, then we must bring our language alive (*jīvit garāuṃnu parchha*)'. While some used space in journals to emphasise solidarity within the Nepali Hindu community—for, example, the Gorkhā Samiti explicitly appealed to 'poor, rich, low and high castes (*sānu jāt, thulo jāt*)' C2(4): 117; a news report in *Ādarśa* (1(2): 30) emphasised that the public Sarasvatī *pūjā* was a common undertaking of 'Nepalis')—the increasing adoption of periodicals as a medium for personal advertising led to the appearance of matrimonial notices which highlighted the continuing, but changing, importance of caste membership.<sup>312</sup> Meanwhile, despite the Nepali community's heterogeneous composition, its political face came to be associated with an explicitly Hindu, communal agenda. Alongside its anti-British rhetoric Chandan Simh's AIGL developed a strongly anti-Muslim tone (Lama 1997: 38). The poor state of relations between Hindu Nepalis and Darjeeling's Buddhist community was illustrated by Govardhan Guruñ's speech at the founding of the HPSU (*Nebulā* 1(2): 22), which also hinted at the rigidity with which religious and ethnic affiliation had been bound together:

Nowadays because there are separate associations of one's own *jāt* and *dharma* among us, whenever any one association says or does anything related to its own society or *dharma* then the brothers of other societies are displeased (*manmā chīso pase jasto hunajānchha*). For example, if the Gorkha Association raises any social issue for everyone's benefit then one suspects that the Buddhist Association will raise doubts about it. Similarly, one understands that the Gorkha Association will have its doubts about any work undertaken by other societies.

Within the Nepali community, Hinduism was also fundamental to the promotion of a brave or heroic identity. Here it is necessary to engage with two influential analyses of social and national identity which tie themselves to interpretations of martial history. The first may be dismissed briefly: Tanka Subba, one of the leading academic writers on

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<sup>312</sup> Such advertisements offer an interesting, and hitherto neglected, perspective on the transformation of social practices. In 1930 (*Ādarśa* 1(3): 48), a Magar Subedar in the Burma Military Police sought a bride from within his own community. She should be educated and skilled in housework, but he would consider a particularly well educated candidate from any of the '*gorakhālī pānī chalne jāti*'. In 1936 (*Nebulā* 1(12): 18), a joint notice sought grooms for a Brāhmaṇ and a Tamang; as well as specifying suitable *thars* it emphasised that suitors must be educated: the Brāhmaṇ to Middle English level and the Tamang to Upper Primary.

Darjeeling, as well as on wider questions of ethnic and Indian Nepali identity, has claimed (1992: 55-56) that 'the Gorkha identity in India was born on the battlefields - in the military history of the Gorkhas ... Other occupational categories had little role in conceiving the Gorkha identity and delivering it.' In support of this bold assertion he cites various renowned 1940s political leaders of military background. This thesis stands as a firm refutation of his theory, both in its exposition of participation in the process of moulding Nepali identity (Subba uses 'Gorkha' to stand for the entire Indian Nepali community), and in its demonstration that this process was largely complete by the 1940s: while leaders of that time may have helped in 'delivering' identity they had no chance of 'conceiving' it.

The second, and broader, hypothesis deserves lengthier consideration, not least because of its persuasive remoulding of Nepali historiography. Pratyoush Onta (*The Politics of Bravery*, 1996c) sites the efforts of India-based Nepalis such as SūDhaPā within a narrative of the development of Nepali nationalism. However, his chosen theme of bravery and his argument that it was central to the conception of Nepali history and *jāti* identity in India in this period is undermined by two factors. First, his straightforward equation of *vīratā* with bravery is misleading and does an injustice to the range of meanings of the Nepali terms. Second, his claim that one rhetorical theme (among many) from a handful of writings by Sūryavikram is evidence of a broad intellectual or political project is not well supported by evidence. Onta never defines the 'bravery' that features so prominently in his analysis. The assumption that 'vīr' equates to 'brave' (as his glossary simply states) provides only one blunt analytical tool with which to dissect supple and subtle discourse. Certainly *vīr* can mean 'brave' and often does, but so too does it mean 'heroic', 'mighty', or (as a suffix) 'eminent' or 'excellent in', while the derivative abstract noun *vīratā* covers 'heroism', 'courage', and 'fortitude'.<sup>313</sup> As the range of English terms imply, these terms are not solely concerned with bravery of the sort one associates with soldiers.<sup>314</sup> In fact, *vīr* is

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<sup>313</sup> These English definitions are borrowed from McGregor's Hindi dictionary (1993: 933). There is no Nepali-English work of equivalent authority and the range of connotations in both languages is near-identical.

<sup>314</sup> Indeed the standard Nepali dictionary (Pokharel 1983/84: 1239)—which gives precedence to the nominal, rather than adjectival, form of *vīr*—does not reach the common term for 'brave' (*bahādur*) until the end of its third line of definition, while the term 'warrior' is given only as the second definition. It is the nominal form that Onta seems to find in Jñavālī's writing. Here the neatest

fundamentally a religious rather than a martial epithet, although both aspects are intertwined within a divinely sanctioned order of *dharma*. More importantly in terms of the written word, use of *vīr* is conditioned in Nepali, as in other Indic languages, by a lengthy and elaborate literary tradition.<sup>315</sup> This is something that Sūryavikram and his educated contemporaries were well aware of.<sup>316</sup>

Introducing his thesis's central chapter ('Creating a Brave Nepali Nation in British India: Writing *Bir* History') Onta promises (1996c: 146-7) to 'delve into the history of the other (i.e., non-Gurkha) Nepalis in British India who organized their politics of identity around the bravery theme', proposing that 'the Nepali proto middle-class actors in India' built a 'historical genealogy for the Nepali nation ... via the self-conscious fostering of the Nepali language and the writing of a particular *bir* history of the Nepali nation'. In short, he argues that language-service and '*bir*' history were the twin pillars of *jāti*-consciousness, promoted by a class of writer-activists. Yet the only evidence he offers for this '*bir*' historiography is that of Sūryavikram, and despite peppering his own prose with '*bir*' he

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English gloss for a *vīr* is surely a 'hero'. *Vīr* could also be used more generally to refer to someone of remarkable gifts, such as the strongman reported in *Sundarī* (2(5)) who could stop moving vehicles with one hand. Adjectivally, too, 'heroic' is better suited to describing the rhetorical register of both older *vīr* poetry and the search for modern national heroes.

<sup>315</sup> For example, Devy's '*Of Many Heroes*' (1998) takes its title from a tenth century Sanskrit poet and critic and uses heroic models as an entry point to a historical overview of Indian literary historiography.

<sup>316</sup> In Darjeeling's *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā*, Dīnanāth Sāpkoṭā published a twenty-one page essay on poetic *ras* which specifically detailed and illustrated (1935: 23-24) the four categories of embodiment of *vīraras* (which itself is defined as 'the enduring quality (*bhāv*) that arises from effort/enthusiasm (*utsāh*)'): the *dānavīr*, *dharmavīr*, *yuddhavīr*, and *dayāvīr*, i.e. those eminent in generosity, *dharma*, war, and compassion. This example is particularly apposite as it appeared prominently alongside two of Sūryavikram's own essays (1935a, 1935b), and the inside cover of the journal even advertised his biographies of Rām Śāh and Dravya Śāh. There can thus be little doubt that the complexities of *vīr*'s range of reference and connotations are not only of interest to subsequent historians but were a topic of sophisticated discussion by Sūryavikram's colleagues. Onta's lengthily argued assertion that Bhānubhakta was established as a '*bir purus*' does, however, implicitly recognise that the quality of *vīratā* could be attributed to a Brāhmaṇ poet who never went near a battlefield. Later (1996c: 246-47) he notes explicitly that Bhānubhakta and Motūrām 'were brave not because they held the sword on behalf of Nepal but because of their service to the Nepali language'. However, in attributing to Sūryavikram 'the first effort to render the modern history of Nepal as *bir* history', he dismisses in two sentences (1996c: 196-97) the entire genre of *vīr* poetry (dating from before the unification of Nepal) that has given its name to a literary era (Śreṣṭha 1990/91). Such poetry may not have been 'historical' in terms of Sūryavikram's modern methodology but was certainly related to the *vaṃśāvalīs* which formed his sources. Indeed, *vaṃśāvalīs* themselves are surely the epitome of the '*bir* genealogy'.

does not provide a single direct citation illustrating Sūryavikram's use of *vīr* or any related word. The central theoretical construct of his thesis surely deserved the support of closer textual reading and reference. The wide range of Nepali writings examined in previous chapters suggest that Onta's analysis does not represent general discourse but only addresses one minor, perhaps atypical, lexical trope of Sūryavikram's.<sup>317</sup> As the epigraph at the head of Chapter 1 shows, Sūryavikram also called for the rejection of martial values and argued that education, not battlefield bravery, was the way forward for *jāti* glory.<sup>318</sup>

The most significant missing link in Onta's argument is Hinduism, the importance of which is consistently downplayed or ignored, not just in the case of *vīrata*.<sup>319</sup> It was Hinduism that provided the narrative that linked *jāti* history to both community cohesion and battlefield achievements: perhaps this explains why the Royal Nepal Army has opted for Śiva's pan-Hindu *triśūl* as its emblem rather than the secular and local *khukurī*. It was

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<sup>317</sup> Indeed, the general adoption of *vīratā* as a national theme probably came only with Sāgarmaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit's *Nepālī vīratā*. The author's own preface (1945/46: 1) expresses this work's general sentiment: 'It is *vīr* nations alone that can remain independent in the world. Nepal today is independent. The credit for this belongs to Nepali *vīratā*. Nepali *vīratā* has been heard of across the world, it is indivisible. Nepali subjects have clashed one by one with the nations of the world that are called strong but no one has been able to knock down Nepali *vīratā*.'

<sup>318</sup> This did not, of course, imply a rejection of patriotism but did lead to a considered criticism of jingoism. Thus Sūryavikram (Bhaṭṭa 1927: 7) praises Bhānubhakta for achieving a balance of realism and hyperbole: apart from one description of Kathmandu inspired by a heart full of *deśbhakti* (patriotism), he checks himself and does not go over the top. This love of country may have led to unwarranted exaggeration but it was nobly inspired (*ibid.*: 10): 'he was incapable of imagining that his own country's capital was worse or smaller than that of any other country in the world'. But Sūryavikram insists that his patriotism was not like the unpleasant form espoused by some today (*ibid.*: 10-11), whereby countries must expand and put others to the sword, exploiting other nations deviously for their own gain and profit. Onta (1996c: 183) states that he did not have access to this book.

<sup>319</sup> The first chapter (1996c: 31) states his aims: '... nobody has provided a sustained analysis of the cultural context from which Nepali responses regarding Gurkha service originated. It is this absence in the literature that my dissertation will try to eliminate.' The first three chapters ignore religion altogether and there is no reference to Hindu values in the fourth and fifth (including the 'bir history' chapter). In the chapter on *rāṣṭriya itihās*, which opens with one brief reference to Nepal language, Hinduism and the monarchy as the triumvirate of official Nepali national culture in Panchayat period (254, restated at 299), his claim that 'making students recite early in the morning words that evoked grand images of the Nepali nation had become more important than praying to Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning' (264) implies that nationalism somehow displaced religious sentiment rather than incorporating it; later Sāgarmaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit's reference to the 600 children of 'Arya Gorkha' at Nalapani (277) passes with no more explanation than that this intended 'to nationalize ethnicity with a particular Hindu slant' (279). The use of *rāṣṭriya* itself (a new entry to Nepali with Hindu overtones) is unproblematically assumed as simply 'national'. Similarly *dharma* is baldly translated as 'religion' (300 and glossary). There is no mention of Hinduism in the concluding chapter.

also Hinduism that supplied the moral framework within which cultural responses to military service were formulated. The relationship of martial *vīratā* to morality would have been well-known even to the illiterate through popular tales from the *Mahābhārata*: Droṇa's agonising choice between sentiment and duty, Kṛṣṇa's battlefield teachings to Arjuna (combined with some distinctly underhand fighting tactics), the inevitable death of the mighty Karṇa are all episodes that force the audience to consider the essence of courage and heroism. And in all cases this consideration cannot be reduced simply to contemplation and admiration of bravery, but rather to how heroic actions make sense in terms of religious order. Precepts of *dharma* have thus coloured South Asian and Nepali understandings of bravery and lead to a clash with British understandings which goes some way to explaining the concomitant disjunction in the valorisation of Gurkha bravery which has been convincingly exposed by Des Chene (1991).<sup>320</sup> In particular, while British military tradition and training (as exemplified by Thāpā (1914), examined in 2.3.3) encourages soldiers to act for the honour of the regiment, this does not equate to the complex relationship between personal duty and social/religious responsibility encompassed by the Hindu-conditioned *vīratā* and *vīr*.

The deployment of *vīratā* by early Nepali writers, and its relation to Hindu tradition, enabled them to appropriate the historic virtues that were being rediscovered by Indian nationalist historians in other languages. The elaboration of a heroic Nepali identity with an ancient genealogy came at the same time as a wider use of heroic narratives in South Asia, especially in Hindi literature (cf. Orsini 2002: 208-15). Rather than seeking to establish Nepali bravery as a culturally unique phenomenon, the priority of many writers was to site it within a glorious Aryan tradition. Thus *Chandra* (1(6): 12) reproduced from the Hindi journal *Pāṭalīputra* an article on *vīr pūjā* in India to demonstrate that hero-worship was a quintessentially Hindu phenomenon: 'The work of soldiers has been placed above all others by Hindus, Persians, Greeks and Romans alike. Yet nowhere among them is the worship of

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<sup>320</sup> Des Chene's account is based on a particular Gurung community which reminds us that a more detailed analysis of 'Gurkha' understandings of bravery must encompass not merely Hindu values but the complex of values of each community of origin. While Des Chene's study performs this task admirably for one community, much more research would have to be undertaken before we could gain a fuller picture of, for example, Magar, Rai and Limbu traditions alongside broader categories such as 'British' and 'Hindu'.

heroes found as the Hindus have practised it.' Vaijanāth Sedhāim's poem 'To a Gorkha soldier' (1915a), urged the soldier to defeat the enemy, remembering always that 'we are all Aryan warriors of the heroic land (*vīr bhūmi*)' and that victory will surely come through upholding one's duty according to *vīr dharma*.<sup>321</sup>

Tying perceived national or ethnic qualities to Aryan tradition endowed the modern Nepali community with historicity, thus Tārānāth Śarmā's relation of contemporary behaviour to that seen 'among the Aryans in ancient times' (1919a: 16). Meanwhile, Nepali literary interpretations of bravery extended beyond *vīrkālīn* poetry (fn. 316) to popular works such as the *Vīrcharitra* and *Vīrsikkā* (2.3) which defined *vīratā* in terms of moral action as well as fighting ability.<sup>322</sup> Thus the title page of Rudraprasād Śarmā Ḍhakāl's *Bīr-babrubāhan* (1932) declared that 'boys must certainly look at the subjects of morality, *dharma*, and behaviour in this'. The sixty-nine page story is an episodic account of how the brave Kṣatriya Babruvāhan ultimately triumphs after many battles to become king in Manipur. But the author's preface highlights the moral, rather than adventurous, aspects of the tale: 'In this book there is certainly *vīr-rasa* but at the same time I have also included things full of morality and *dharma* so boys will sharpen their intellect by reading this book. By making clear what sort of behaviour one should display to which people in this world, boys will certainly walk on the correct path.'<sup>323</sup> Ultimately it was this linkage of soldierly and social conduct that conditioned social and literary responses to service in the armed forces, and the connection of current military prowess to timeless Aryan virtues that furnished modern Nepali society with a validating historical depth. And while cultural constructions of bravery varied, both British authorities and Nepali writers coincided in their vision of warriors' discipline translating into a stable social hierarchy framed by moral guidelines. Nepali discourse managed to combine the affirmative Orientalist stereotype supplied by British discourse with validation from within Hindu tradition. As the Secretary

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<sup>321</sup> Admittedly, this was a loyalist response to the recruitment of Nepalis to fight in the First World War, but it indicates that the correlation of Nepali bravery with Aryan history and Hindu morality was also present within Nepal, where Sedhāim lived.

<sup>322</sup> For an interesting discussion of the significance of *vīratā* in *Vīrcharitra* see Rāi (1974: 3-15).

<sup>323</sup> This story reached a wider, and potentially illiterate audience, when it was developed into a play in Darjeeling (probably in the mid-1930s although precise information is lacking; Rāi 1984: 62).

of the Gorkhā Samiti observed (C2(4): 116), 'recognising Gorkhas' heroism, courage and patience the British and Nepal governments have bestowed many great honours on Gorkha soldiers ... as far as possible we must also save today's children from the bad path and set them on the correct path.' Hinduism was thus not only the fundamental principle of social organisation and religious identification, but also the philosophical system within which heroic qualities were valorised and deployed to reinforce the community's idealised self-image of historical moral virtue.

### 5.5. Nation, ethnicity and the *jāti*

The foregoing sections have illustrated that the conundrum of Nepaliness was not to be resolved by citizenship, and it is clear that this was not a major concern of writers of this period. Linguistic and religious identifications provided powerful symbolic ties but were built on the shaky foundations of an ethnolinguistically and culturally diverse range of constituent groupings. Fundamentally, as has been repeatedly implied in earlier chapters and directly hinted at by the ancestral connotations of *prajā*, answering the question of who was included in the subjecthood of 'we Nepalis' required a new construction of *jāti*-hood that could rationalise diversity within a united, composite identity. This is clear from Pārasmaṇi's contribution while proposing the foundation of Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan in 1924 (cited in Pradhān 1982: 39):

We are Nepalis. By Nepali I mean that here we incorporate many *jāts*. Newar, Gurung, Limbu, Tamang, Bhote, Lepcha, Tharu, Sunuwar are all Nepali *jātis*. Every *jāti* has its independent language but as Nepali is the language that everyone can speak and understand we must first bring about *unnati* of the Nepali language.

Kumar Pradhān (1982: 39) comments on Pārasmaṇi's use of terminology that 'in the aforementioned speech *jāti* and *jāt* are used as synonyms basically because in post-unification Nepal society *jātis*, even while maintaining [a sense of] *jātīya* distinction, have started to be counted as *jāts*'. In other words, *jātis* which were once seen as independent communities or ethnic groups have been reduced to sub-categories or a larger Nepali social structure, in the same way that *jāts* are only constituents of a larger caste hierarchy. One sentence (*ibid.*) encapsulates Kumar Pradhān's own analysis: 'various *jātis* transformed

into *jāts* and incorporated together make the *nepālī jāti* of Darjeeling'.<sup>324</sup> Here an elucidation of the basic connotations of the two terms *jāti* and *jāt* is called for. As Hutt, following Whelpton, notes (1997a: 116), the standard Nepali dictionary employs each term in its definition of the other (cf. Pokharel 1983/84: 486-87).<sup>325</sup> However, his assertion that they are used 'almost interchangeably in common Nepali parlance' is questionable: that *jāti* would not be used for 'caste', nor *jāt* for 'race' or 'nation', demonstrates some clear separation of referents. This also qualifies Pradhān's claim that Pārasmaṇi treats the words as synonyms. In fact, Pārasmaṇi's usage is precise and distinct on this point: his *jātis* are specifically non-Nepali-speaking ethnic groups and it is only if they are to be aligned with the ancestral Nepali-speaking community's existing hierarchical caste subdivisions that they can be considered *jāts*.<sup>326</sup> Further, Hutt's interpretation (*ibid.*) that *jāti*'s 'basic meaning is "species" or "type", as distinct from *jāt*' is unhelpful. It is *jāt* that most aptly describes 'type', in part because of its etymology. Although unacknowledged by Nepali lexicographers, usage of *jāt* in Hindi—and thus surely in Nepali also—is influenced by its conflation with the Arabic *zāt* (giving the primary meaning of 'nature, essence'; McGregor 1993: 367).<sup>327</sup> This conflation may help to explain the exclusively nominal use of the term in Nepali, where a purely Sanskrit derivation would perhaps imply more adjectival usage.<sup>328</sup> It also suggests that Burghart's translation of *jāt* solely as 'species' perhaps

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<sup>324</sup> Pradhān also notes (1982: 32) the pressures for a unified *jātiya bhāvanā* caused by Darjeeling Nepalis' situation within India as a whole: 'In the context of India, the growth of a *jātiya bhāvanā* in Darjeeling Nepalis is a question of their separate existence (*viśiṣṭa astitva*) in the face of the country's other language-speakers and *jātis*.'

<sup>325</sup> Quigley (1993: 4-12) offers perhaps the most useful definition of *jāti* in relation to 'caste' in English, and dissects its relationship with *varṇa*, but does not consider *jāt*.

<sup>326</sup> To this extent, the regularisation of both caste and ethnic group as equivalent categories within a larger structure recalls the *Mulukī Ain*, in which both were treated as *jāts* (Höfer 1979: 46).

<sup>327</sup> Nepali court and official language had for centuries been heavily influenced by Farsi, and had thus incorporated many Arabic loanwords from an early stage. Jaṅg Bahādur, framer of the *Mulukī Ain* that codified the *jāt* hierarchy within Nepal, was fluent in 'Hindustani' and used it to communicate with British representatives (Whelpton 1983).

<sup>328</sup> Sanskrit *jāta* is a past participle, literally 'born': Nepali employs this usage only in Sanskrit compounds (Pokharel 1983/84: 486). However, Sanskrit did also use *jāta* as a noun, with the meaning of 'race, kind, sort, class, species' attested in the *vedas* (Monier Williams 1899: 417). Darjeeling activists may also have been influenced by Bengali usage: while *chalit bhāṣā* prefers *rakam* as its basic word for 'type', some other Bengali dialects predominantly use *jāt* for this sense. Śarmā's monumental but idiosyncratic new *Nepālī śabdāsāgar* (2001/02), the only work comparable in scope to Pokharel's, bizarrely claims that *jāt* is derived from *jāti*. On Nepali lexicography see Yadava & Kansakar (1998).

overemphasises the genetic connotations inherent in the Sanskrit root *jan* while ignoring its potential implication of classification on bases other than birth alone. We could conclude that the most helpful English term to bear in mind when considering *jāti* and *jāt* is the cognate form 'genus'. It underlies both the adjectives 'genetic' and 'generic', which are etymologically related but highlight the important semantic divergence between common understandings of classes that are birth-related or non-specific.

A detailed assessment of Nepali writers' usage of *jāti*, a study that no writer to date has undertaken, is revealing. In its most basic sense—and that least encumbered by its links to ethnic and caste groups—*jāti* can speak of the already established linguistic communities of India, and similarly of the nations of the world as a whole.<sup>329</sup> This usage is found repeatedly and consistently throughout the period of study.<sup>330</sup> Within this scheme of things there was at least a place for Nepalis as a community fit for comparison with others of similar composition. Thus alongside reference to other *jātis* one encounters comparative usage such as Sūryavikram's fear (1919b: 90; cited in full in 3.2.2) that 'the whole *jāti*' has 'fallen behind the others'. There was widespread consensus that Nepalis form a *jāti*, regardless of its diverse composition.<sup>331</sup> Membership of this *jāti* started, moreover, to be

<sup>329</sup> This is not counting one pseudo-scientific usage, in which *jāti* is used to refer to male or female sex (e.g. *strī jāti*, Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān 1918a: 8; Śānti Devī 1935: 6; *āimāi jāti*, T.R.: 1), or simply to the human race as a whole (*manuṣya jāti*, Achyutānanda Śreṣṭha 1918: 4). Sāhā (Chaṭṭopādhyāya 1915: 133) also demonstrates this basic usage: 'consider that there is sin in humankind (*mānis jātimā* [sic])'. In these examples at least, *jāti* rather than *jāt* encapsulates the sense of 'species'. Another example suggests some overlap, that both *jāti* and *jāt* share a sense of *jāṭīyatā*: 'within our *jāti* ... no one has pride in their own *jāti* society. Even among animals also *jāts* such as crows exhibit *jāṭīya* love' (C1(12): 10).

<sup>330</sup> For example, 'nowadays the civilised people of various *jātis* have opened many libraries for the *unnati* of their own languages' (*Chandra* (7): 19); Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (1918a: 9) writes of Baṅkimchandra's role in *jāti unnati* and the development of *jāṭīya* sentiment (*bhāv*); Tārānāth Śarmā (1918b: 17) cites the examples of 'every country that has achieved *unnati* and *unnati*-minded (*unnatisālt*) *jātis*'; Vaidya (1918: 22) recounts the progress 'our neighbouring Bengali brothers' have achieved for 'their own *jāti*' through education; Achyutānanda Śreṣṭha similarly invokes 'the people of India's other *jātis* places literature as a *jāti* attribute (1918: 2, 3); C1(12): 9 compares Nepalis to 'all the *jātis* of the world'; GKK (28(9): 68) likewise speaks of the 'western *jātis*'; in *Ādarśa* Śeṣ Maṇi (1930b: 26) referred to 'the *unnat-jātis* of the world', while Rūpnārāyaṇ Siṃh (1930: 38) comments on folk traditions and oral storytelling among 'every *jāti* of the world'; D.K. Pradhān's first editorial in *Nebulā* (1935: 4) also called readers attention to the '*jātis* of the world' and the 'learned people of those *jātis*'.

<sup>331</sup> Thus 'let us make our own *jāti* good' (Dīpak 1915: 20), '*unnati* of *jāti* and society' (Ārjyāl 1918: 13), the 'Nepali *jāti*' (Jñavālī 1919a: 19; 'Ek śeṣ' 1918: 28; Kṛṣṇaprasād Upādhyāya, C2(3): 88; Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān 1930a: 1), the 'Gorkha *jāti*' (Dhūṅyāl 1918e: 15), , 'the pride of the Gorkhali *jāti*' (C1(12): 10).

seen as a condition for access to benefits, such as the Bhim Scholarships for students entering higher education or scientific or vocational training: the Secretary of the Fund was Dharaṅīdhar and applicants were restricted to 'students of the Nepali *jāti* resident in this district' (*Nebulā* 1(4): 11). However, *jāti* heterogeneity is hinted at by occasional plural references alongside the singular noun.<sup>332</sup> Some writers attempt to reconcile the constituent parts of this *jāti* to the whole and acknowledge that the composite formation contains different linguistic groups. The conceptual reasoning employed in such references implies that Kumār Pradhān's model of *jātis* having to be downgraded to *jāts* when subsumed in a larger entity, while logical, is not essential. Various writers were content to envisage *jātis* within *jātis* without the need for a hierarchy of categories.<sup>333</sup> Meanwhile the *jāti* can be related to a sense of *jātīyatā* which can encompass shared community imaginings.<sup>334</sup> *Nebulā*, predictably, concentrates on relations between Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas.<sup>335</sup>

Far from being confined to a pastime for later historians, the need consciously to question the basis of community identification was a pressing requirement for early Nepali activists. Chairing the meeting at which Pārasmaṅi made the contribution cited above, Hariprasād Pradhān had also articulated the aims of integration and unification around a

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<sup>332</sup> 'Gorkha *jātis* ... the Gorkha *jāti*' (C1(1): 22), 'our *jātis* have fallen asleep' (Modinī 1918: 16).

<sup>333</sup> For example, 'within the Nepali *jāti* also each *jāti* has its own language' (Kumudinī 1918: 11), 'in the languages of the various *jātis* of Nepal' (Ārjyāl 1918: 14), 'within the Nepali *jāti* there are many small *jātis* and they have their different languages, nevertheless they speak Nepali' (A.B. Guruṅ 1935: 3). Nevertheless, Pārasmaṅi did persist with his categorisation of sub-Nepali groups as *jāts* within the *jāti*: 'The country of us Nepalis is Nepal. There Nepalis of Khas, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, and other *jāts* have lived and live now. Previously there was no mixing/harmony (*mel*) among them but after Mahārāj Pṛthvīnārāyaṅ Śāh conquered Nepal ... there was harmony and the communication of fraternal feeling among them.' (*Nebulā* 1(2): 41). This hierarchical usage of *jāti* is very much in line with its Sanskrit signification: in opposition to 'species' it represents 'genus' but in opposition to 'individual' it represents 'species', in both cases defaulting to the higher level categorisation (Monier Williams 1899: 418).

<sup>334</sup> Thus, 'newness, independence and the sentiment of *jātīyatā*' (Maṅi Nārāyaṅ Pradhān 1918a: 9, writing of Baṅkimchandra), 'an independent *jāti* must have an independent language ... an independent *jātīya* life' (Jñavālī 1919b: 91), 'the social life of the Gorkha *jāti*' (C2(4): 116), on the negative side '*jātīya* splits and selfishness' (Śeṣ Maṅi Pradhān 1930c: 104).

<sup>335</sup> Here, interestingly, *jāt* is often used to describe the Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha communities where one would expect *jāti* (*Nebulā* 1(1): 5, 10, 1(2): 21, 22, 28). This probably reflects the desire to inculcate a feeling of unity between the communities: if they are seen only as *jāts* then they could conceivably ally their broader *jātīya* feelings to an supra-communal hill-peoples' identity. Such a desire was not, however, explicitly expressed; more common were appeals (as in *Nebulā* 1(2): 41) to 'fraternity'.

common language, although he saw individual sub-Nepali *jātis* as part of a *rāṣṭra* rather than a single *jāti*.<sup>336</sup> In order to justify the naming of a literary organisation he too constructed a sophisticated argument for the status of the term 'Nepali' and for the language's relation to its speakers. The fact that the language does not belong solely to one dominant group is cited in its favour as a reason for using it as a symbol for the entire community: the implication is that its lack of strong ties to a single group of people gives it a neutrality which enables it to be adopted with comfort by speakers of a variety of other languages. The argument is perhaps helped by the fact that some of the terminology employed was also malleable and open to new interpretations. Hence the description of various *jātis*—here apparently equivalent to ethnic groups—as components of a great nation or *rāṣṭra*.

There are some discernible influences at work here. The concept of *jātis* being subsumed into a larger collectivity which could be named *rāṣṭra* can hardly date back earlier than the first probings of nationalist thought in late nineteenth century north India. Kaviraj (1992) describes a move from 'fuzzy' communities to 'enumerated communities' as a necessary precondition for the emergence of a fully-fledged Indian anti-colonialism and nationalism. The colonial emphasis on enumeration and classification typified by census operations (cf. Cohn 1987) was one impetus for this process and for Nepali efforts to rationalise the form of community which institutions such as the NSS were now representing.<sup>337</sup> In this context Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' is a useful

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<sup>336</sup> His speech is discussed by Hutt (1997a), who also presents a translated extract. Onta (1996: 52-53) also reproduces extracts of this speech and discusses its significance.

<sup>337</sup> The enumeration in print of Nepali speakers dates to at least the first issue of *Chandra* (1(1): 1) in 1914: 'speakers of this language number in the hundreds of thousands'. A few months after his earlier reference to 52 lakhs of speaker of the Gorkha language (5.2.1), Pārasmaṇi (C1(11): 15) implied a significant increase in the Nepali population with his reference to 'we 66 lakh Gorkhalis'. Of course, in both cases there is no explicit contrast between the number of speakers of the language and the number of members of the community: even counting competent users of Nepali as a second language, the former group could only be a small subset of the latter. In any case, the poor statistics available at the time make it unsurprising that there should be wide differences in estimates of the total number of Nepalis. In his patriotic appeal, Svadeś Premī Bhakta (1921: 2) sought to rally even greater numbers of Nepalis behind the Rāṇā regime: 'Let us with our 75 lakh mouths cry out in a loud voice that Gorkha is our country, Nepal is our birthland and Śrī 3 Chandra Śamśer Jaṅg is our ordainer and king (*vidhātā mahārāj*)'. Later, Madan Thāpā (1935: 31) wrote of 'some 30 lakh Nepalis who have left Nepal and headed abroad to settle in India, Sikkim and Bhutan.' The categorisation of Nepalis in the 1921 census also became an issue of direct contention in the pages of *Taruṅ Gorkhā* (Lama 1997: 73-74). Thākur Chandan Siṃh challenged the government's reluctance to list Nepalis as a

way of explaining the shift from local identity paradigms to wider group identification based upon common characteristics that had to be 'imagined' across divides of caste and ethnicity, economic and occupational background, and geographical location. Still more importantly, Western-inspired models of 'people' and 'nation' could not be painted onto a blank epistemological canvas. There had to be a process of negotiation with pre-existing local concepts of community and identity, the sort of process that was taking place at the foundation of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan.

It is in the examination of these processes that the study of the early world of print and associated spheres of emergent public discourse can perhaps make some of the most revealing contributions. Equally, the site of such debates in the Nepali community in India—at the intersection of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and political boundaries—means that their study may provide new perspectives on issues that have so far been addressed primarily from the viewpoint of numerically dominant communities whose claim to inclusion in subsequent nationalist paradigms is beyond dispute. Writing on the novelist and essayist Bankim Chandra Chattōpādhyāy—a dominant figure in Bengali literature of the late nineteenth century—Sudipta Kaviraj makes an illuminating study of the tensions, ambiguities and contradictions in the work of one of the earliest Indian writers to search for expressions of nationalism. In particular, he analyses the problems Bankim faced in describing and categorising communities (1995: 113): Bankim's writing in this area is notable for his 'uncharacteristically ambiguous use of the word *jāti* for [many] communities, starting from castes, to a regional people, to religious communities, to the nation.'<sup>338</sup>

Bankim's trouble in defining precisely which community should be elevated to nationhood highlights issues of semantics and the (literal and metaphorical) translation of

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separate community, even though they formed almost half of the foreign-born population settled in India (and thus, for example, outnumbered the politically represented Parsi community by some 2.7:1), not to mention the unrecorded numbers born within the country.

<sup>338</sup> It is also important to note a fundamental difference in Nepali and Bengali usage: *jāti* has emerged in Bengali as the most common term for 'nation', along with associated terms such as *jāṭiya* 'national' and *antarjāṭiya/antarjāṭik* 'international' which in effect refer to nations as political entities, while *jāti* also retains its earlier layers of meaning such as 'type', 'lineage', 'caste', or 'community'. Nepali's use of *rāṣṭra*, *rāṣṭriya*, *antarrāṣṭriya*, etc. to refer to states avoids such a direct semantic overlap.

concepts which lie at the very foundation of early Indian nationalist narratives. Kaviraj's description of his struggles in expression (1995: 128-29) is worth quoting at some length for its relevance to the parallel problems facing early Nepali activists:

In [Bankim's] essays we find the most diverse identities being called *jāti* ... Evidently, he is attempting a gerrymandering of the meaning-boundaries of this concept, cancelling its earlier indeterminacy, and fixing it on to the new, unfamiliar meaning ... European history teaches us what it is for a people to be a nation. However in Bengali it is not yet a descriptive term: on the contrary the other meanings of *jāti*—caste, religion, sect—are descriptive. They describe groups which exist and make sense to the natural consciousness. But in Bankim's use, it indicates a possible community which chooses itself as the collective actor for historical initiatives. The task then becomes one of naming the nation, electing it from among the many given contenders of caste, religion, language identities, or creating one that is larger, more complex, yet unnamed.

The ambivalence and uncertainties that plagued Bankim in his search for the right articulation of Bengaliness troubled Nepali thinkers as well. Discourse throughout the period encompassed by this thesis reflects the fact that writers had to grapple with terminology and conceptualisations that were not always wholly appropriate or wholly defined. However, most accounts by later Nepali writers imply that the transition to a developed *jāti* consciousness was either straightforward (a single step on a linear path to modern nationhood) or so obvious that it could pass without comment. Thus Bandhu's useful essay on the contribution of the Nepali language to national unity and identity assumes the unproblematic equation of *jātiya* with 'national'. He directly links developments in self-identification to a nationalist project (1989: 128; emphasis added):

...unifying forces had been working both in and outside the country. The Nepalese living in India were called to unite and work for their common culture and language ... Nepali language was a distinct factor in their identification, the poet Bhanubhakta Acharya remained a symbol of their identity as a *Jātiya* [sic] *Kavi*—a *national poet*. During the first half of this century important steps were taken to promote Nepali language and literature ... gradually Nepali *linguistic nationalism* gained momentum. The feeling of Nepali linguistic nationalism that grew in India was now able to replace terms like *Khaskurā*, *Parbatiyā* [sic], or *Gorkhālī* with *Nepālī*.

Such easy correlations may be convenient but belie the complexities of Nepali discourse during the period in question. As Onta (1999) has convincingly demonstrated, Bhānubhakta did not 'remain' as an identity symbol but was rediscovered and then consciously promoted: while his work circulated widely (cf. 2.2) and Sūryavikram's edition of his biography published by the NSS (Bhaṭṭa 1927) laid the foundations for later recognition, the process of his cultivation as a cultural icon only gained momentum in the

1940s. Yet it was language that formed the sole viable foundation for *jāti* unity within Nepal and beyond. While Burghart (1984: 116) emphasises the government's rendering of the ethnic concept of country in terms of 'species' (*jāti*) as the fulcrum in the identification of people and polity, it was only through the spread and adoption of the Nepali language that the varied constituents of the Nepali nation could develop a coherent sense of being a 'culturally unique people' (1984: 101).

As has been suggested in the conclusion of Chapter 1.3, the essential condition for this development was the emergence of a print community that was able to include, as consumers and producers, diverse social elements. This process was beyond the control of the Rāṇā regime but conveniently furnished the cultural and intellectual building blocks of Panchayat nationalism, which effectively converted the putative *jāti* into a fully-fledged *rāṣṭra* by applying concerted state will and resources to the concepts that had been elaborated in less focused public discussion. Beyond the bounds of print, the everyday adoption of a *lingua franca* was a powerful unifying factor. As Pradhān (1982: 32) observes, language formed 'the main basis for a feeling of solidarity among the proletariat' in Darjeeling: while it has come to be called *rāṣṭrabhāṣā* in Nepal, it was as a *jātīya bhāṣā* that it bound together Darjeeling's Nepalis.<sup>339</sup> That the translation from *jāti* to *rāṣṭra* was made so rapidly and successfully perhaps indicates the inherent weakness of *jāti* conceptualisation rather than its strength. As the discussion above has illustrated, despite its repeated invocation and efforts towards its more precise definition, it never entirely rid itself of multivalence. In this it reflects its heritage as a similarly polysemic motif in Hindi and Bengali discourse, its ambiguity only heightened in Nepali by the more confused relation between people and polity. Ultimately, *jāti* served writers and speech-makers best by its flexibility of reference: it provided an emotional identifier which could be stretched to accommodate the more nebulous imaginings of a variegated community but its lack of conceptual rigidity protected it from harder tests of specificity.

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<sup>339</sup> Kumār Pradhān's seminal essay (1982: 3-50) is actually entitled 'The Nepali *jāti* of Darjeeling: a historical study'.

## 5.6. 'We Nepalis'

This chapter has attempted to unearth, through a concentrated analysis of discursive trends, the answer to an apparently simple question: what did people mean when they started talking and writing of 'we Nepalis'? In other words, how did individual Nepalis themselves come to develop and deploy self-aware concepts of Nepali group membership? And how did this group relate to other social and political formations, such as family and ethnic units, or nations and states? The simple original question has led us through some difficult territory, and through areas where discursive processes were not necessarily always able to resolve contradictory approaches and understandings.

The foregoing analysis has clarified the definitional arguments that took place in this formative period over the nature of Nepaliness and the means of expressing it. We have seen that the resolution of basic issues, such as language nomenclature, can tell us about the complications inherent in arriving at a wide common consensus on questions of common concern. Equally, overlapping concepts of countries and states, of ethnic groups and a potentially supra-ethnic *jāti*, have hinted at the obstacles that had to be surmounted in creating a clearer sense of the underlying nature of membership in the Nepali community. The public sphere of this period provided the means for the successful negotiation of these categories and for the emergence of a sense of 'we-ness'. Although some questions of definition remained unanswered, the 'plausibility' of the Nepali community (to borrow Anderson's (1991: 15) useful phrase) had been established and provided a basis for the further elaboration of social attributes. The words *hāmī nepālī* ('we Nepalis') came to encapsulate the conscious recognition of a concrete, binding socio-cultural or ethnolinguistic entity. And—as a final counterpoint to the dissection of group terminology examined in the preceding sections—this 'we' most frequently addressed itself to a simple, potentially all-embracing, 'society' (*samāj*). Amidst the involved discussion of peoples, countries and states, society furnished an organising principle that bridged the gap between the private individual and the unlimited public world. As with the seeming equality of access and lack of hierarchy within journals (3.1), an imagined society could be constituted more democratically than a *jāti* which bore lingering connotations of caste and ethnic divisions.

Nevertheless, the limitations of the 'we' arrived at in this period are revealing. The 'we' who addressed their peers in the public sphere were almost always male and reflected the differential progress of integration: they came to include non-Nepali-speaking hill ethnic groups considered as *pānī chalne jāts* faster than *dalits* (indeed even determined Buddhists were very publicly associated with Nepali projects while low caste Hindus remained excluded), and—not only in Darjeeling where they were hardly represented, but across the entire public sphere—they consistently excluded Tarai-origin Nepalis, be they of ethnic groups such as Tharus, or Hindu communities with links across the border. Several important constituencies—numerically, socially, regionally—were not brought within Nepali discursive practice or within the commonly imagined 'we'. The exclusion of women and *dalits*, while discriminatory and debilitating to the quality and scope of public debate, is not surprising: it was, after all, consistent with centuries of male, high caste hegemony. The absence of a *madhesī* voice in public affairs is, however, more notable. There was no geographical imperative for lack of participation: we have seen many examples of hill Nepalis settled in the Tarai or posted there and writing books and articles; Birganj had a bookshop from around the start of the period of study and we have seen evidence of the opening of schools and libraries. Nor was illiteracy a particular problem: while it may have sidelined some communities altogether, Maithili-speakers could draw on a literary tradition that comfortably eclipsed that of Nepali in its age and sophistication. One might conclude rather that the *madhesī*-less Nepali 'we' illustrates one enduringly primordial facet of the composite identity, that the emotional unity of a *jātīya bhāvanā*, the sense of equal commonality within the plural pronoun, could not extend beyond a hill solidarity conditioned both by both comparable habitats and natural challenges and a shared sense of separation from the plains. If the Tarai is now a 'cauldron' (Lal 2003a), its disenfranchised and disaffected peoples' grievances simmering, the factors that have led to this divisive marginalisation can be seen to have crystallised and been institutionalised during the 1920s and 1930s, even if their roots go back much further than that.

The process of constructing a Nepali 'we' was inherently, necessarily inclusive. But at the same time it was inherently, necessarily exclusive. While the community imagined by writers in *Sundarī* or *Mādhavī* was essentially a closed world of male, Sanskrit-educated

Bāhuns with Banaras connections, we have seen that by 1940, particularly with inspiration from Darjeeling and the further reaches of the Nepali diaspora, the Nepali 'we' had dramatically transformed and broadened its signification. Yet for Nepalis as much as Europeans, the value of alterity in reinforcing a distinct sense of self and community was inescapable: while the other *jātis* of India and beyond provided more remote benchmarks for comparison, it was contiguous groups who sharpened the delineation of Nepaliness's boundaries. Nepalis knew they were not Muslims or Marwaris but—despite the presence of Muslims and even South Indians within Nepal for centuries and in Kathmandu their incorporation within the Newar social structure—while these distant 'others' impinged on the collective consciousness it was the immediately present Tibetans and Bhutias, *madhesīs* and Lepchas whose otherness reassuringly validated a self-consciously separate Nepaliness. And these multiple marginal dichotomies were rarely disputed in the realm of public debate. We do not see in this period the emergence of significant 'subaltern counterpublics' (Fraser 1992): as has been observed above, movements for Buddhist identity (be it of the Tibetan-oriented Mahāyāna strand promoted by Darjeeling Tamangs or the Theravāda tradition of Newars from Kathmandu to Calcutta) or Hindu religious reform, for peasant or proletarian solidarity, for women's or minorities' recognition and advancement within the Nepali community, did not at this stage constitute themselves as publicly discursive solidarities in opposition to the normative public sphere, nor did they play a decisive role as power centres in its process of contestation. The Nepali 'we' was—as it still remains—a forceful rhetorical concept and, for many, a marker of a genuinely shared solidarity and unitary identification but the tensions and paradoxes of its simultaneously inclusive and exclusive tendencies could not be simply resolved and cannot be ignored.

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## Conclusion

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Picture two photographs. Kathmandu, 1924: Prime Minister Chandra Śamser is announcing the emancipation of slaves. On the brick and cement platform under the Ṭuṃḍhīkhel parade ground's *kharī* tree King Tribhuvan is seated alongside the Prime Minister, his ceremonial parasol brushing the tree's lower branches. A large crowd is assembled, a sea of cheap cotton caps kept in order by ranks of soldiers. The pomp and ceremony is in the middle distance; it is impossible to identify Chandra himself. But in the foreground of the photograph spectators are distracted from the ceremony, faces turn around to gaze up at the raised viewpoint of the photographer. A puzzled old man, a grinning youth, the direct stare of a moustachioed man in white *ṭopī* and scarf. In a few fleeting glimpses, the chance for Nepal's public to be immortalised in silver nitrate. Darjeeling, 1921: a small band of social activists are organising the first Nepali Sarasvatī *pūjā*. A row of fasting boys are uniformly arrayed in white *daurā suruvāl*. The seven or eight-year-old with the toothy smile who looks out at us is Chhaviḷāl Śarmā, later to become a celebrated comic actor. Standing shoulder to shoulder are Harisiṃh Thāpā and Hastalāl Girī; to one side is Dhanvīr Mukhiyā.<sup>340</sup>

Few photographs of Nepalis were taken in this period; fewer still have survived. Most accounts would tell us that the first photograph is 'history' and they would not be wrong: the announcement of slaves' emancipation was indeed an important political event, even a 'highlight' of Chandra's administration (Shaha 1990: II, 57). Most accounts would relegate the second photograph to the level of parochial interest. But this thesis suggests that it is the

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<sup>340</sup> The Kathmandu photograph is reproduced in von der Heide (1997: 61); the Darjeeling photograph is described by Rāi (1984: 13). On photography in Kathmandu until 1960, including observations on its adoption for self-representation by the 'proto-middle class' from the 1920s, see Onta (1998).

second picture which hints at a more important underlying narrative. The prime ministerial proclamation was a display of power to a captive audience, the public drafted in as non-participating extras whose role was to witness, and thereby authenticate, a promulgatory representation of authority. But the more modest Darjeeling scene speaks of a different public altogether, a public that, in its voluntary, cooperative institutionalisation of social values, was representing itself to itself. That it was Sarasvatī they chose to worship is no coincidence: as the patron of learning and the arts she was the goddess who had overseen the building of a new form of Nepali public culture. Harisimh Thāpā, the humble government compositor, had become an independent printer and publisher, his journal *Chandrikā* a forum for the rational interchange of opinions that had helped to shape social consciousness. Hastalāl Girī, an economic migrant from rural eastern Nepal, would soon be an active member of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan's executive committee as well as eventually Steward of the Lewis Jubilee Sanatorium, in front of whose Motilal Library the group is pictured. Dhanvīr Mukhiyā, the Gurung boy from a tea estate who had worked as a cowherd and then faith healer, had already managed the first ever public staging of a Nepali play and, a decade later, would found the Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan, dedicated to performing the last rites of deceased destitutes with respect, regardless of their caste or ethnic origin. The public that they constituted, that represented itself in writing, in drama, in organised debates, in social work, in education, in politics and public *pūjās*, and even in the occasional photograph, offers us a reflection of the composite, agentic, articulate subjecthood of a Nepali 'we' whose collective voice would echo through the following decades.

One local event in Darjeeling thus hints at a summation of the transformational dynamics of the Nepali public sphere. Participation in these processes had stretched to many parts of Nepal but it was with the end of the Rāṇā regime that it could truly extend itself, encouraged by the settling in Kathmandu of some of India's leading Nepali figures. By 1959 Sūryavikram was Member Secretary of the Royal Nepal Academy, in charge of its cultural section, and Hariprasād Pradhān, whom we have encountered as a founder of Darjeeling's Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, was Nepal's first Chief Justice. Dharaṇīdhar also moved to Kathmandu, an established star in the national literary firmament even though he

never wrote another poem as memorable as his inspiring ‘Jāga jāga’ of 1919. Pārasmaṇi was awarded an honorary doctorate from Tribhuvan University in 1975, a year after Sūryavikram had been elevated to Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy. The intense and continuing influence of their understanding of Nepaliness, developed outside the country, in India, was supported by close cultural connections with the next generation of Darjeeling talents. When Ambar Guruṅ set Agam Siṃh Girī’s ‘Nau lākh tāṛā’ (‘Nine hundred thousand stars’) to music, he created an enduringly proud but sentimental anthem for Indian Nepalis. But soon he was drawn to Kathmandu, lured by King Mahendra in his successful attempt to reach out to the wider ‘Nepali world’ beyond the border, his setting of Girī’s call to the diaspora eventually gaining a new significance in the 1980s as a theme tune for the young Nepal Television. Guruṅ was at the forefront of a remarkable band of soulful yet cerebral poet-lyricists and singers, a Darjeeling-Kathmandu axis which provided the soundtrack to decades of imaginings of Nepaliness, whose songs still bind Nepalis from Simla to Shillong with a single emotional skein.

As the introduction explained, however, events of the mid-1930s onward led inexorably to the establishment of separate Nepali political spheres in India and Nepal. With Indian independence and the removal of the Rāṇā regime, separate political interests conditioned separate patterns of political and civic involvement. The initial decade of Panchayat rule witnessed the creation of what Onta (1996c) typifies as *rāṣṭriya itihās* while Indian Nepalis pursued limited local aims such as campaigning for increased language recognition. The cultural development of the Nepali middle classes in both countries, however, remained centred on Nepali, even as its usage saw a dramatic expansion into new areas. The Nepali language now enjoys unprecedented currency and vitality: as the *lingua franca* of Nepal, Darjeeling, Sikkim and still much of Bhutan as well as a sizeable diaspora elsewhere in India and beyond; as the medium of a flourishing press, of journalism and literature; as a medium of education from primary to doctoral levels, approved in Nepal and India; at last, as of 1992, as one of India’s national languages, inscribed in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution and as such endorsed on every bank-note that changes hands from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. Meanwhile Nepali culture—from the imposed rigours of *daurā*

*suruvāl* national dress, from the Sherpa-dance-to-Newar-architecture, Himalayan-peaks-to-Tarai-jungle ethnic mosaic of tourist brochures, to a resurgent Nepali pop music industry—stands distinct from both Tibet and India. And nationalism of one species or another is an inalienable part of all political creeds, from Congress to Communist, Maoist to monarchist, even—in a different sense—for the Indian Nepalis of Bhandari and Chamling-led Sikkim and for the patriotic Gorkhas of Ghising’s Darjeeling: for Rāi (1993a, Rai 1994), Indian Nepalis form a nation in themselves and have their own nationalism. But Nepali is also the language in which deconstructions and reconstructions of Nepaliness are taking place, the last two decades having seen serious challenges to the conception of a unified identity that activists of the 1920s and 1930s had sought to project.

Traumatic events in the north-east of India in the 1980s—the expulsion of tens of thousands of ethnic Nepalis and their acceptance by Nepal—emphasised the continuing importance of a perceived Nepali ethnicity, and again a Nepali world that transcended both national borders and the modern legalities of citizenship (a question that also underlies the treatment by India and Nepal of Bhutanese refugees in the early 1990s). Yet while these events reinforced a sense of Nepali solidarity in the face of a common threat, they also contributed to the GNLFF’s forcible refashioning and rewriting of Indian Nepali identity as ‘Gorkha’ as it fought for a separate Darjeeling Nepali homeland. Ghising’s movement set itself apart from previous petitions for self-government in that it depended on a reinvention of local Nepali identity and a rebranding of Darjeeling Nepalis as ‘Gorkhas’ that addressed Nepalis as much as outsiders. It led to a re-reading and re-writing of history on both sides of the debate that was characteristically selective, biased, and disingenuous. The public cultivation of Bhānubhakta started in Darjeeling and the first and most famous of his statues stands on Darjeeling’s Chowrasta promenade. Its decapitation in 1991 was one of the more lasting symbolic gestures by proponents of a separate Indian Gorkha identification deliberately distanced from the state of Nepal and its cultural icons. In Nepal, the arrival of multiparty democracy in Nepal in 1990 also brought about radical changes in public life. The sudden enabling of public debate of a type pioneered in 1914-1940 dramatically brought to the fore dissenting voices, a multitude of groups challenging the straitjacket of officially imposed Panchayat-sponsored Nepaliness.

Despite this thesis's focus on defining a Nepali collectivity, we must remember that the public sphere did not constitute a homogeneous realm, nor did Nepali discourse automatically exclude other identity constructions. We have seen that contributions to the shaping of Nepali social consciousness came from a very early stage from non-ancestral Nepali-speakers, the books of Magar, Newar and Rai writers published by Banaras Brāhmaṇs prefiguring the more substantial and sustained influence of dozens of Indian Nepali writers of Tibeto-Burman-speaking origin. This was specifically a feature of the Indian component of the public sphere: it is significant that almost all writing emerging from Nepal was by Bāhun-Chhetrīs or the occasional Newar. In Darjeeling, Santavīr Lāmā sponsored the NSS's publication of Sūryavikram's biography *Rām śāh* (1933) just as fellow Buddhist Lāmā Gokul Munśī had subsidised Sāpkoṭā's *Man laharī* (1923), both of which in different ways were cornerstones of an increasingly powerful normative Nepaliness, the former as a foundation for a Nepali nationalist narrative, the latter in terms of its depiction of a moral religious culture (3.4.2). Yet Lāmā would end up best known for his pioneering research and writing on Tamang language, culture and Buddhist religious practice. He was thus one of the founders of *janajāti* historiography but, while his books had Tamang titles, his medium was Nepali; in this, his work foreshadows the shape of current *janajāti* discourse, which is conducted almost exclusively in Nepali. His first work appeared in print a few years after the equally innovative Imānsimh Chemjon's seminal *Kirāṃt itihās* (1952). Drawing on the lessons learned in the development of Nepali academic culture—such as Sūryavikram's historical methodology or Pārasmaṇi's linguistic efforts (Chemjon later produced Limbu-Nepali and Lepcha-English dictionaries as well as a history of Kirat-era Vijayapur written in Nepali)—they also sowed the seeds of independent-minded investigation of minority ethnic cultures.

Manjushree Thapa's novel *The Tutor of History* (2001) has put Nepali writing in English on the map. But are there such things as tutors of history in present-day Nepal? As Rai (2002) reports, Tribhuvan University and its campuses have approximately 143,000 students, yet out of this vast total, the central history department has only seven students (of the 35 enrolled) who actually attend classes on a regular basis. In an academic environment

now dominated by the marketplace of job opportunities the tutors of history easily outnumber their tutees. The university's Hindi and Sanskrit departments only admitted five students each, of whom only two attend. Who is going to write future histories? Amidst the proliferation of commerce and information technology courses in private colleges, and in an environment where study of Nepali is increasingly subordinated to English, who will be interested and able to dig deeper into narratives of Nepaliness? While Nepali youth happily devour Hindi films and steep themselves in the culture of Indian satellite TV, how many will open a book of *chhāyāvād* poetry and make connections even to a popular modern poet such as Bhūpi Śerchan? When senior academics abandon their critical faculties to worship at the temples of monarchism, nationalism and cheap anti-Indian sentiment, who will open a new generation of scholars' minds to the wider horizons of intellectual enquiry?

Eric Hobsbawm recently observed that 'the worrying thing at the moment is that history—including tradition—is being invented in vast quantities ... At present it's more important to have historians, especially sceptical historians, than ever before.'<sup>341</sup> If the picture of history's academic situation within Nepal is bleak, then there is also not much comfort to be gained from scholarship beyond its borders. Nepali history has attracted only two doctoral dissertations from non-South Asian scholars in the last two decades: Whelpton (1991 in book form) and Michael (n.d.), both focusing on early-mid nineteenth century political and diplomatic history. Within South Asian history, and the faculties of its study around the world, Nepal is largely invisible: there is not a single tenured academic in any university outside Nepal who is an expert on modern Nepali history. Ironically, many of the more interesting academic developments of recent years have come from outside the discipline altogether. If anthropology, first introduced to Nepal as a tool of colonial administration for the identification of 'martial tribes', bears some of the blame for establishing essentialist paradigms of ethnic classification then in its recently more reflexive and historically reflective incarnations it has moved beyond the undifferentiated anthropological present to engage with diachronic complexities. As Holmberg and March observe in the introduction to their significant contribution to this process (1999: 7-8)

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<sup>341</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, interview, *The Observer* (London), 22 September 2002.

'anthropology ... has, with notable exceptions, produced an ahistorical image of Nepal as an array of discrete societies and cultures', yet they convincingly demonstrate that this need not be the case. Citing the work of Toffin, Burghart, Ortner, Des Chene, Liechty, Guneratne, Lecomte-Tilouine and Lewis, Onta (2003: 5) goes so far as to suggest that 'most of the recent non-Nepali anthropological work on Nepal has had an explicit historical dimension'.

But can we rely on anthropology to provide a full reading of that historical dimension? The answer is surely 'No'. Nepal, in terms of either area or population, has received far more intensive anthropological attention than almost any other part of South Asia; indeed, among the humanities and social sciences, social anthropology is the *de facto* default discipline for foreign scholars, and its value for non-governmental employment prospects has seen student numbers in Nepal increase every year since its introduction in Tribhuvan University (cf. Mishra 2003: 9-10).<sup>342</sup> Yet the enduringly pervasive participant-observation methodology—even as it is increasingly applied to contexts other than classic single village or single group studies, and *pace* Höfer (1979, 1997) and Maskarinec's (1995) impressive combination of ethnographic and textual-critical methodologies—offers few openings for textual analysis of the sort that could illuminate complex social discourse. Des Chene (1996: 107) argues that the neglect by anthropologists of written sources is seriously debilitating to studies of ethnicity or nationalism and suggests that in the case of 'communities that are not mainly constituted or known to their members through face-to-face interaction, as is the case for the study of *janajati* politics in the public sphere and for the study of nationalism(s), then individual encounters become an insufficient basis for analysis'. This thesis proposes that there is room for a new analytical approach to questions of Nepali identity and social consciousness, that the tools of textual criticism can usefully be applied to materials beyond the bounds of historical and literary studies to date. Moreover, it contends that studies such as this are central to a better understanding of Nepali state and society as well as to a more nuanced reading of mainstream-periphery discourses in India. In essence, it has argued for radical revisions to Nepali historiography in general, and to

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<sup>342</sup> Masters degrees in Sociology and Anthropology attract some 1200 entrants each year, although Mishra (2003: 10) estimates that only 10-20% complete the degree.

literary studies in particular. But the investigative techniques it has adopted may point to fruitful lines of enquiry for researchers in other disciplines grappling with issues of ethnicity, identity, and complex constructions of social consciousness.

This study is very much a preliminary effort. The materials it draws on have hardly been studied before and the analysis it presents is also new. It makes no claims to comprehensiveness or infallibility. Rather, it hopes to prompt further studies of the areas it has problematised and, if necessary, revisions to the hypotheses it has proposed. Work to refine or refute its arguments could take place within a number of disciplines: literary studies could revisit some of the previously ignored writings and judge my interpretations; linguistic investigation (especially if and when Nepali is blessed with the possibility of digital corpora analysis) could no doubt improve upon my outline of terminological developments within discourse and their significations; anthropology could provide valuable perspectives on the way in which discourse generated by an elite was received, rejected, or reworked by communities excluded from the process of its production; political scientists could revisit the historical sites of public culture to extend the analysis of political culture and consciousness further into the past than at present; sociologists could surely move beyond my relatively unsophisticated application of Habermasian or Andersonian models to the particular circumstances of Nepali society as well as bring such conceptualisations to bear on post-1940 developments; they could also offer more theoretically informed readings of the relationships between class, caste, ethnicity and cultural hegemony whose outlines have only been roughly sketched here; even for economists this thesis presents some new lines of historical enquiry, especially in relation to the influence of economic models on cultural and social development and the interconnectedness of market modernity to identity amalgamation and propagation, as well as to the formation of a functioning literary bazaar; lastly, historians by now accustomed to Onta's powerful critiques of Nepali historiography and its failings may take this as yet another attack on a discipline that is already facing many difficulties. They would, of course, be partly correct: I have been unflinching in my assessment of history's shortcomings as much as those of other subjects, and such harsh criticism is not often to be heard. But I hope that the more positive messages will prevail: that large fields of

potentially productive study remain to be explored and that there is no personal or disciplinary monopoly on their investigation. More the reverse: the more researchers with a wider range of methodological tools the better.

Recently, daily newspapers and weekly news magazines from Nepal have started to be sold in Darjeeling's Chowk Bazaar alongside their Indian counterparts. With readers on the internet, Kathmandu papers are reaching out to a new diasporic audience, not just to the descendants of settlers across India but to communities of Nepali students and professionals scattered around America, Europe, Asia and Australia, to new classes of economic migrants. The last couple of years have seen the launch of Nepali television stations whose satellite footprints can, for the first time, hope to cover nearly all of their potential audience. While witnessing the rapid pace of change in current developments it is hard not to be reminded of the first newspapers and journals that carved open the channels of communication that we now take for granted, to think of Pārasmaṇi's father with a bag of Banaras books slung over his shoulder on the climb to Darjeeling, or to picture copies of *Gorkhā Saṃsār* making their slow way by coolie, cart and train from Dehradun to Sikkim, Manipur and Burma. Since the advent of multiparty democracy in Nepal people are talking about an emerging Nepali public sphere, about a nascent civil society. But it seems to me that we are merely witnessing a further transformation in the public sphere. Rather than its novelty, we should be concerned with its functionality, and we could be informed by historical precedent. Habermas himself saw the ideal bourgeois public sphere in Europe—even if never perfectly achieved—as being degraded and neutered by its transformation into a realm of mass communications controlled by powerful interest groups which once more reduced much of the public to a passive audience. Meanwhile Nepal's body politic faces threats of extremism from many directions, as well as the challenge of incorporating multiple new readings of ethnic and national history and belonging.

Will the Nepali public regress to the role of mute spectators at promulgations and displays of authority? Will it succumb to bombardment by the corporate-sponsored output of FM pop, satellite soaps and the gamut of globalised commercialism? Or can we see hopeful signs that a model of rational-critical engagement in the social and political realm is

being revived? That the internet polls, the radio phone-ins, the upsurge in local independent media, the continuing growth in literacy and education point to the potential of a discursive, self-reflective sphere encompassing new means of communication and drawing in an ever-wider public? This thesis offers no answers but it may help to frame pertinent questions with which to dissect contemporary cultural issues. In a context of heightened controversy over identity politics, it is worth reiterating that this study should not be read as an endorsement of the particular dominant configuration of Nepali identity arrived at within the early public sphere. It offers instead an analysis which illustrates that the construction process was predicated on the management of diverse constituencies and contestations, that public discussion not only allowed for disputation but depended upon it. Recent deconstructions of dominant understandings of Nepaliness—be they by Indian Gorkhas or Nepali *janajāti* activists—may be politically revisionist but are located within the same discursive framework that was established in the first part of the twentieth century. If we can start to understand how the early public sphere functioned we will be better placed to interpret current tensions between normative conceptualisations and their challengers, as well as their negotiation in the realm of public affairs.

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## Glossary

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This glossary aims to include all terms which are used in the thesis without definition, and those which are described at point of first use but which recur throughout the text of various chapters repeatedly. Where a Nepali word is used in the main text without diacritics, the correct transliteration is offered here in brackets after the anglicised version. A few references are offered for particularly important sources of further information. On folk literary forms Bandhu (2001/02b) is an invaluable aid: the addition of an index would make it an ideal reference work. Many entries have drawn on definitions in the *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (McGregor 1993) and the Royal Nepal Academy's definitive dictionary, the *Bṛhat nepālī śabdakoś* (Pokharel 1983/84).

Asterisks indicate cross-references to other glossary entries.

*āchārya*, a spiritual preceptor, leader of a sect, or (as a title) a man of distinguished learning; in this sense it is frequently adopted as a title by Nepali Brāhmaṇs; cf. *upādhyāya*\*.

*ādikavi*, 'first poet' or 'original poet'; the title bestowed on Bhānubhakta Āchārya by many Nepali literary historians and with wide popular currency although rejected by some.

*ajāt*, 'without caste': those who have lost caste membership or have no caste, non-Hindus; see 5.5.

*alaṅkāra*, in terms of rhetoric, an ornament of sound or sense, or a figure of speech.

**All-India Gorkha League**, political association founded by Ṭhākur Chandan Siṃh in 1924 in Dehradun; its membership was extensive and it opened branches across India and even in Sikkim, Bhutan, Burma and Fiji; its mouthpiece was the weekly *Gorkhā Saṃsār*; following decline in the 1930s it was revived in the 1940s by Ḍambar Siṃh Guruṅ in Darjeeling.

*ānā*, a coin equal to one sixteenth of a rupee; a sixteenth part or share.

*apsarā*, a dancing-girl at the court of Indra; *apsarās* were frequently sent to test the resolve of *munis*\* doing *tapasyā*\*.

**Avadhī**, dialect of Hindi native to UP, including Banaras; a prominent literary language whose most famous exponent was Shakespeare's contemporary, Tulsīdās, author of the *Rāmcharitmānas*; Avadhī was used by different Hindu sects' devotional poets as well as by Muslims; cf. Brajbhāṣā\*.

**Ārya Samāj**, religious reformist movement founded by the Gujarati Svāmī Dayānand Sarasvatī; it proposed a neo-Hinduism that combined modern English education with Vedic fundamentalism; a prominent Nepali proponent was the martyr Śukra Rāj Śāstrī (see 4.4), whose father Mādhavrāj Joṣī had first introduced its principles to Nepal in 1893 and set up a centre in Kathmandu in 1895; cf. Orsini (2002: 111-16) and Brahma

- Samāj\***.
- āsūkavi**, an extempore poet; the title bestowed on Śambhuprasād Ḍhuṅgyāl (see Appendix 3).
- Bābu**, honorific title for an educated man, especially used of government servants (as in Bengali).
- bāhramāse**, poetic genre describing the twelve months of the year, especially as symbolic of the emotions of separated lovers.
- Bāhun**, see Brāhmaṇ.
- bhajan**, devotional song, hymn, particularly associated with Vaiṣṇava\* and *bhakti*\* traditions.
- bhakti**, religious devotion, especially the popular Vaiṣṇava movement which swept north India from the twelfth century and challenged Brahmanical orthodoxy; this movement gave birth to a long and vigorous tradition of *bhakti* poetry in Brajbhāṣā\* and Avadhī\*, as well as other languages including, to a lesser extent, Nepali; the devotee is a *bhakta* (male) or *bhaktinī* (female).
- bhāradār**, Nepal's traditional nobility; originally referring primarily to senior members of the Chhetrī\* families that formed the closest circle of the Śāh\* court, the term came to include other government officers under the Rāñās\*.
- Bhāratvarṣa**, formal name for India (see 5.2.2).
- bhāṣā**, language; often signifies the vernacular (Nepali) in opposition to Sanskrit; hence *bhāṣā sāhitya* 'vernacular literature'; cf. *mātrbhāṣā\**.
- bhāṣonnati**, *unnati\** of language.
- Bhoṭ**, Tibet.
- bhoṭe**, Tibetan; used more loosely—and often pejoratively—of Tibetan-related ethnic groups, such as Tamangs and Sherpas.
- Bhutia** (Bhuṭiyā), Tibetan-origin natives of Sikkim; sometimes used as variant of *bhoṭe\**.
- birtā**, a type of land grant in Nepal different to *jāgir\**: traditionally *birtā* grants were limited to Brāhmaṇs, were tax-free and inheritable; see Regmi (1995: 54-58). Not to be confused with *vīratā\** despite their identical pronunciation in Nepali.
- Brāhmaṇ**, members of the highest Hindu caste; the derivative Nepali term **Bāhun** is used for hill Brāhmaṇs, who are further divided into Upādhyāya Brāhmaṇs (*purbiyā* (eastern) and *kumāiṃ*) and Jaisī Brāhmaṇs, the offspring of irregular Brāhmaṇ unions who are debarred from priestly functions; **Bāhun-Chhetrī** designates the combined upper Hindu castes of hill (*pārvatīya\**) Nepalis; Newars have their own Brāhmaṇs and both Buddhist and Hindu high castes; see Tarai\* for details on its caste system.
- Brahmo Samāj**, a Bengali religious reformist movement founded in the early nineteenth century by Raja Ram Mohan Roy; its Neo-Hinduism bore similarities to Christian Unitarianism; cf. Ārya Samāj\*.
- Brajbhāṣā**, Hindi dialect of the Agra-Mathura area which became Hindi's most prominent poetic language, dominating Kṛṣṇa *bhakti\** and *śṛṅgār\** traditions and remaining the favoured medium of poetry until displaced by the *khaḍī bolī\** espoused by Chhāyāvād\*.
- chākarī**, a system of flattery of senior officials which became codified in Nepal as regular attendance on officials.
- chalit bhāṣā**, modern standard Bengali based on a Calcutta dialect; championed by

Rabindranath Tagore, it gradually replaced the old *sādhu bhāṣā*\* in the early twentieth century.

*chaprāsī*, an orderly, official messenger, or peon (so called after their metal badge of identification).

*chhanda*, metre, in particular traditional Sanskrit metres (many of which—such as *mālinī*, *sārdūlavikrīḍita*—were used in Nepali poetry) but also local and modern metres; not to be confused with *lay*\*.

**Chhāyāvād**, movement in Hindi poetry of the 1920s onwards that valued personal experience and psychological/mystical insight over traditional themes; leading exponents such as Jayśaṅkar Prasād, Sumitrānandan Pant, Mahādevī Varmā and Nirālā experimented with new verse forms and promoted *khaḍī bolī*\* over Brajbhāṣā\*; Chhāyāvād was highly influential but the subject of intense contemporary criticism.

**Chhetri**, hill Nepali Kṣatriyas: caste Hindus ranked below Brāhmaṇs\*; in common Nepali usage often includes or is hyphenated with Ṭhakurīs (a select socially and politically powerful grouping that also included Magars\* and others).

*dalit*, literally ‘downtrodden’; the term now preferred as a collective name by members of low and untouchable Hindu castes.

**Damāī**, tailors and musicians: see under *occupational castes*.

*daurā suruvāl*, Nepali national dress (as codified by the Panchayat\* regime and still compulsory in parliament, official functions, etc.) consisting of tapering pyjamas and a plain, long-sleeved and round-necked side-tied shirt; normally worn with European-style suit jacket and Nepali hat (*topī*).

*deś*, ‘country’; often used in Nepali to refer to India, in particular the Gangetic plains (see 5.2.2); *deśbhakti* is patriotism, *deśbhakta/deśbhaktinī* a (male/female) patriot; cf. *bhakti*\*.

*deśī*, ‘of the country’; sometimes refers to India (thus *deśī bhāṣā* can mean Hindi) but generally means simply ‘domestic’ or ‘local’ as opposed to foreign (see 5.2.2).

*devanāgarī*, the script in which Nepali is written; apart from a couple of distinctive features, it is shared with other languages such as Hindi and Marathi.

*dhāmī*, a traditional faith healer.

**dharma**, the complex of religious and social obligations which a devout Hindu is required to fulfil, right action, duty, morality, virtue; customary observances of a community or sect; prescriptions or sanctions of religion, moral law; religion; particular nature or character, walk of life; spiritual merit (adapted from McGregor 1993: 525); notoriously hard to translate neatly but is *not* simply a synonym for ‘religion’.

*dhūṃḍo*, the staple food of much of Nepal’s hill population; a thick paste of corn, millet or buckwheat flour cooked in hot water, it is generally seen as a poor family’s substitute for rice.

*dhūṭo*, fine rice bran flour.

*dohā*, verse couplet form made famous by Brajbhāṣā\* and Avadhī\* poetry and also adopted in Nepali; it is a rhyming couplet with caesuras on the eighth and sixth syllables of the fourteen-syllable lines.

*dohorī gū*, popular competitive/teasing/flirtatious folk duet format, often performed by groups of boys and girls.

*gāine*, a hereditary caste of singers and *sāraṅgī*-players.

*gaṅgājal*, water of the Ganges, considered holy by Hindus.

*gazal*, a form of verse couplets immensely popular in Urdu and adopted in other languages, including Nepali (properly *ǧazal* (of Arabic origin), *gajal* in Nepali).

**Gorkha**, Gorkha is the name of the hill town and state which, under the Śāhs\*, conquered the rest of present-day Nepal; *gorkhā* is a derivative adjective often applied to the Nepali language and people (see 5.2); cf. Gurkha\*.

**Gorkha Agency**, company established in Kathmandu in 1914 by Vaijanāth Seḍhāīm (see Appendix 3) to publish and sell Nepali books as well as to market other consumer goods.

**Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti** (Gorkha Language Publishing Committee), Nepal government organisation that was established in 1914 after much petitioning by Rāmamaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit, who became its first director (see 4.2 and Appendix 3); it published and distributed various books, in particular textbooks; in 1930 it changed its name to **Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti**.

**Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan**, social and cultural organisation founded in Darjeeling in 1932; see 4.3.2.

**Gorkhā Grantha Prachārak Maṇḍalī**, Bombay-based association headed by Paṇḍit Harihar Āchārya Dīkṣit (see Appendix 3) which aimed to publish and promote Nepali books.

**Gorkhaland**, the proposed name of the state for which Subhas Ghising's **Gorkhaland National Liberation Front** fought in the 1980s; the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was the result of this movement.

**Gorkhali** (*gorkhālī*), another adjective derived from Gorkha\*; as 'Gurkhali' traditionally used by the British military as a name for the Nepali language; see 5.2 for its connotations.

**Gorkha Library**, Kurseong, established in 1913, Darjeeling District's earliest Nepali library moved into its own purpose-built building in 1919; it is still in existence as the Gorkhā Jana Pustakālaya; see 4.3.2.

*grantha*, book, volume; a *granthamālā* is a series of books.

*guṇḍā*, a lout or ruffian.

**Gurkha**, the name used by the British military for soldiers from Nepal; India refers to its Nepali soldiers and their regiments as 'Gorkha'.

*gurū*, *gurū-mā*, a spiritual guide or mentor, teacher (male and female respectively).

**Gurung** (*gurunī*), a hill people speaking a Tibeto-Burman\* language concentrated in central Nepal; along with Magar\* and Khas\*, they formed the bulk of the Śāh\* armies that unified Nepal and still contribute many men to the British, Indian, and Nepalese military.

*guṭhī* (Newari *guthi*), form of common trust that can hold land; among Newars\* there are various other *guthis* which perform social and ritual functions.

*halanta*, a consonant ending in the subscript *virāma* (which cancels the inherent *a* vowel) and by transfer the sign itself; *halanta bahiṣkār* was an orthographic campaign waged over decades by Rāmamaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit (see Appendix 3) to eliminate its use in written Nepali.

*hāmī*, *hāmro*, we, our.

**Havildar** (*havalddār*) police or army sergeant.

**Hillmen's Association**, Nepali-dominated organisation formed in Darjeeling in ca. 1917; it pressed for solutions to social and economic problems in the hill areas and in 1930 demanded an 'independent administrative unit' for Darjeeling.

**Hill People's Social Union**, joint Nepali\*, Bhutiya\*, and Lepcha\* organisation formed in Darjeeling in 1934 under the auspices of Sardar Bahadur Laden La and with the participation of many of Darjeeling's leading personalities; it published the journal *Nebulā*; see 4.3.3.

**hindūtvā**, 'Hinduness', a term now closely associated with the programmes of political Hindu organisations such as the Rāṣṭriya Svayamsevak Saṃgh, Viśva Hindū Pariṣad and Bhāratīya Janatā Party.

**Indo-Aryan**, name given to the branch of the Indo-European linguistic family which includes Vedic and classical Sanskrit (**Old Indo-Aryan**, or **OIA**), various Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa varieties (**Middle Indo-Aryan**, or **MIA**) and the modern languages derived from them (**New Indo-Aryan**, or **NIA**), which include Nepali, Hindi, and Bengali; cf. Tibeto-Burman\*.

**jagadādhār paramēśvar**,

**jāgir**, the type of land grant that was generally used to reward soldiers and government officers during Nepal's expansion under the Śāhs\*; related to a system which had spread across north India under its Muslim rulers; *jāgir* grants were generally conditional upon continued service for the government (which was far from guaranteed, with all positions subject to an annual review known as *pajanī*); came to be the standard Nepali term for a government job.

**janajāti**, originally having pejorative connotations, this is the term favoured by current activists as a collective description for Nepal's ethnic minorities, broadly speaking including Tibeto-Burman\* language speaking groups and indigenous inhabitants of the Tarai\*; cf. *jāti*\*.

**jāt**, caste, group, type, species, genus; etymologically and semantically closely related to *jāti*\*.

**jāti**, caste, community, ethnic group, people, nation, genus; on the complex significations of this term see 5.5; *jātidharma* is the *dharma*\* associated with or supposedly practised by a specified *jāti*.

**jātiya**, adjective derived from *jāti*\*; the associated abstract noun is *jātiyatā* or *jātitva*; combined phrases found in the thesis include *jātiya bhāvanā* (broadly speaking, *jāti* sentiment) and *jātiya jīvan* (*jāti* life, in the sense of a common culture); see 5.5.

**jhyāure**, an immensely Nepali popular folk rhythm (*lay*\*)—rather than a metre (*chhanda*\*)—basically marked by a caesura on the fifth, tenth and fifteenth syllables; *jhyāure* folksongs helped to unify the multi-lingual society of Nepal in the early nineteenth century (cf. fn. 45).

**jñān**, knowledge, understanding, wisdom.

**kāl vibhājan**, schematic periodisation or division of literary works and genres into *yugs*\* (eras); cf. section 2.1 and fn. 38.

**Kāmī**, blacksmiths: see under *occupational castes*.

**kāṇḍa**, section, particularly of the *Rāmāyaṇa*\*; Bhānubhakta's version is often referred to as the *sātkāṇḍe rāmāyaṇa* because of its seven parts.

**karma-kāṇḍa**, the body of religious ceremonies enjoined by Hindu law or established by custom.

**Kashi** (Kāśī), a name of the city of Banaras, strictly speaking its religious centre centred on the Kāśī Viśvanāth temple.

**kāśivās**, residence in Kashi, specifically retirement there in the hope of dying within its sacred confines; *kāśivāsī* is the adjectival/nominal form.

**kastūrī**, the musk-deer.

**kavitta**, a folk verse form originating in Doṭī and probably dating to the earliest period of modern Nepali; it arrived in the Himalayas with the spread of *bhakti*\* poetry; Nepali *kavitta*—such as the *Khāmḍo jagāune kabitta* (Adhikārī 1919) cited in 2.3.3—displays clear Brajbhāṣā\* influence.

**khaḍī bolī**, the modern standard of Hindi (literally ‘upright speech’); originating in the Meerut area of UP, it gained currency as a *lingua franca* of the bazaars (identical to ‘Hindustani’) across north and central India; as a literary language it displaced other dialects such as Brajbhāṣā\* in the early twentieth century.

**Khambu**, an obsolete term (absent from current Nepali dictionaries) used as rough equivalent of Rai\*; **Khambuwan** (*khambuvān*) is still in occasional use—in particular, by the Khambuvān Mukti Morchā movement for regional autonomy—as the area inhabited by Khambus, approximating to Mājh Kirāt\*.

**khaṇḍakāvya**, a narrative poem not dealing with a heroic or sacred subject.

**khari**, a particular kind of large tree, sometimes literally translated as ‘chalk tree’.

**Khas**, traditionally but erroneously defined as Chhetrī\*, these people of western Nepal were original feudal Buddhists; *khas kurā* (speech) is one of the older names for the Nepali language (see 5.2) but the actual Khas language is far removed from current Nepali.

**Khasi** (*khāsī*), the dominant people of the Shillong hills, originally called the Khasi Hills by the British and included in Assam until the formation of Meghalaya in 1972; often referred to in Nepali as *khasiyā*, not to be confused with *khas*\*; their language is also Khasi.

**khichaḍī**, a mixture, hotchpotch.

**khukurī**, the curved-bladed knife that has become famous as a weapon of the Gurkhas and national symbol; its origin is obscure and numerous varieties are produced although all share the same basic design.

**kipaṭ**, a land system common in eastern Nepal where ownership was limited to members of a particular community; *kipaṭ* lands were not necessarily restricted to land under occupation or cultivation but could also include forest or wasteland; the communal ‘ownership’ of *kipaṭ* land is better understood as communal ‘landlordship’, as individuals were granted rights over specific tracts of a *kipaṭ* area; see Regmi (1976: 92).

**Kiranti**, see Kirat.

**Kirat** (*kirāt/kirānt*), name for people and region, encompassing Rais\*, Limbus\* and Yakhas who speak numerous languages of the Kiranti subgroup of Tibeto-Burman\* and their traditional homelands: the largely Rai area of Mājh Kirāt between the Likhu and Arun rivers, and the largely Limbu area of Pallo Kirāt to the east (incorporated into Nepal in 1774); for a map see Pradhan (1991: 8).

**laharī sāhitya**, a generic term coined by Kamal Dikṣit for popular romantic/erotic *śṛṅgār*\*

verse (see 2.3.1).

**lāhure**, term for Nepalis serving in, or retired from, foreign armies, particularly the British and Indian; derived from Nepali recruitment in the army of Ranjit Singh of Lahore; **lāhure dāi** (literally ‘elder brother’) is a common form of address to **lāhures** which has gained its own currency in songs which pitch the **lāhure** as a romantic hero.

**lakh** (*lākh*), one hundred thousand.

**lay**, rhythm (as opposed to *chhanda\**), such as *jhyāure\**.

**Lepcha** (Nepali *lāpche*, considered pejorative by Lepchas), ethnic group of Sikkim usually considered distinct from Nepali ethnic groups; Lepchas form only a small proportion of Sikkim’s population and, although it is now taught in schools, the Lepcha language has seen a steep decline in usage.

**Limbu**, ethnic group of eastern Nepal, also present in Darjeeling and Sikkim in large numbers; their traditional homeland is sometimes referred to as **Limbuwan** (*limbuvān*); traditionally practitioners of animism, their language falls within the Kiranti subgroup of Tibeto-Burman\*; along with Rais\*, they have provided the main community for Gurkha\* recruitment in eastern Nepal.

**madise** (or *madhise/madhese*), derived from the Sanskrit *madhyadeśī* (‘of the middle country’) refers to Tarai\* Nepalis and Indians of the Gangetic plains.

**madhyakālīn**, ‘of intermediate period’; the generally accepted designation for the Nepali literary period (*yug\**) within which most of the writings examined in this thesis fall; Śaradchandra Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 76), the leading expert in the field, defined this period as 1885-1933.

**Magar**, ethnic group of western Nepal who have spread through the eastern hills and into Darjeeling; Magars made up much of the Śāh\* armies and have, like Gurungs\*, a long tradition of service in British and Indian regiments; their language is Tibeto-Burman\* but of all Tibeto-Burman speaking groups Magars have perhaps been the earliest and most comprehensively Hinduised, a large proportion speaking only Nepali; **Mangar** (*maṅgar*) is often preferred in India.

**Mahābhārata**, Sanskrit epic dealing with the war between the Pāṇḍava and Kaurava families; includes the *Bhagavadgītā*, the advice given to Arjuna by his charioteer Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra which is a central text of modern popular Hinduism; many other episodes—such as the tale of Nala—have formed the basis for Nepali translations and reworkings.

**mahākāvya**, a single poetical work of large scope and formal style, such as the Sanskrit epics the *Mahābhārata\** and *Rāmāyaṇa\**.

**Maharāj**, ‘great king’, title accorded to Rāṇā Prime Ministers of Nepal; equivalent to **Mahārājā**; the King’s title is *Mahārājādhirāj*; see also Śrī\*.

**Maithili** (*maithilī*), language spoken in the Mithilā region which includes the Tarai\* around Janakpur and parts of Bihar; among New Indo-Aryan languages, Maithili has one of the oldest and most accomplished literary traditions; it had currency as a court language in Kathmandu.

**makai parva** (the ‘corn incident’), name given to a 1920 episode of Rāṇā\* censorship in which Kṛṣṇalāl Adhikārī was jailed for comments in his book on maize cultivation which the authorities interpreted as metaphorically critical of their pro-British attitudes; it has not been definitively established whether Kṛṣṇalāl actually wrote the books himself nor

can we be sure of its contents as the only copy to escape incineration has been lost; Kṛṣṇalāl, a government servant, died in prison before completing his sentence, while other writers such as Śambhuprasād Dhuṅyāl (see Appendix 3) were also caught up in the incident.

**maṅḍal**, sometimes used for in place of the current *maṅḍalī* or *maṅḍale*; an individual of local authority or leader of a group or community.

**maṅgalapāṭha**, the auspicious invocation which opens Sanskrit plays and is often adopted in early Nepali dramas.

**mantri**, minister (as the king's advisor a stock character in Sanskrit plays); secretary of an organisation.

**māṭrbhāṣā**, mother tongue.

**māṭrbhūmi**, motherland.

**mokṣa**, release from rebirth in the world, deliverance or emancipation; **mokṣa bhūmi**, sometimes used to describe Nepal, is a land of *mokṣā*; **mukṭi** has essentially the same sense as *mokṣā*.

**Mongolian, Mongoloid**, see Tibeto-Burman.

**Mugalan** (*mugalān*), colloquial Nepali term for 'abroad', specifically India, derived from its erstwhile Mughal rulers.

**muhallā**, quarter of a town, such as the areas occupied by Nepalis in Banaras.

**mukhiyā**, local headman.

**muni**, a saint, sage, seer or ascetic.

**munṣī**, a writer or clerk, teacher or tutor (especially of Urdu and Farsi), title of respect to an educated man.

**muṣāyarā** (*muṣā'ara*), a gathering at which (Urdu/Farsi) poets recite their poems.

**naī śikṣā**, the Hindi term for English/western education as propagated by the British in India.

**nakhśikh**, head to toe (literally 'toenail to crown of head'); literary term for full description of a person, most often a woman.

**nāṭak**, a drama.

**nāyikā**, leading female character or heroine (of a drama); mistress or beloved.

**Nebulā**, the title of the Hill People's Social Union official journal; the word is composed of the initial characters of *Ne(pālī)-b(h)u(ṭiyā)-lā(pche)*.

**Nepali** (*nepālī*), Nepalese, on usage of these adjectives see the Note on Transliteration and section 5.2.

**nepālīpan**, Nepalinness (see 1.1.2); *nepālītva* is a less common variant.

**Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan**, literary organisation founded in Darjeeling in 1924; see 4.3.2.

**Newar**, (*nevār*), people of the Kathmandu Valley and its environs; the name is cognate with *nepāl*, which originally designated only the Valley; **Newari** (*nevāri*) is a Tibeto-Burman\* language with a lengthy and sophisticated literary tradition heavily influenced by Sanskrit; the traditional Nepali and English nomenclature for the language is retained for convenience, but it should be noted that 'Newar' (for the original *nevāḥ*) is more accurate, and *nepāl bhāṣā* is the term preferred by current language activists.

**nivedan patra**, a letter of request or petition.

**occupational castes**, the main groups among hill Nepali occupational castes are **Damāī**

(tailors and musicians), **Sārkī** (cobblers), **Kāmī** (blacksmiths), and **Sunār** (goldsmiths); these are all ancestral Nepali-speaking groups; they are disproportionately represented in Darjeeling, probably because emigration offered more social and economic opportunities than remaining within Nepal where their low caste status was more rigidly enforced; there are also numerous Newar\* and Tarai\* occupational castes.

**paisā**, specifically a copper coin, a quarter anna; generally ‘money’.

**paḷṭan**, Nepali adaptation of ‘platoon’ but its usage is looser than the English term; it can mean simply ‘army’ or ‘army unit’.

**pañcha**, a council (originally composed of five people), a headman; in later usage only, a Panchayat\* leader.

**Panchayat** (*pañchāyat*), the partyless system of government introduced by King Mahendra in the 1962 Constitution two years after his dismissal of Nepal’s first elected government; the system remained in force, with some modifications under King Birendra (r. 1972-2001), until the *jana āndolan* (people’s movement) of 1990 forced a return to multiparty democracy and the promulgation of a new Constitution; **Panchayat rhetoric** was characterised by the trinity of official Nepali culture—the Nepali language, Hinduism, and the monarchy—and an emphasis on *vikās* (development); cf. fn. 139.

**paṇḍā**, a hereditary Brāhmaṇ superintendent of a place of pilgrimage or temple.

**paṇḍit**, a scholar or learned Brāhmaṇ\*, teacher; used as title of respect for Brāhmaṇs, especially if learned; the diacritically marked transliteration is retained as English ‘pundit’ has gained its own distinctive connotations.

**pānī chalne jāt**, those Nepali castes and ethnic groups among whom the exchange of water is considered acceptable and ritually unpolluting.

**parva**, a book of the *Mahābhārata*\*; also used in Nepali for an event or incident such as the Kot massacre (*kot parva*) or *makai parva*\* (see 4.3.3).

**parvatīya**, also *pārvatīya* or *parbate*, hill (as a qualifier), of the hills; an occasional early alternative name for the Nepali language (see 5.2), and sometimes used as shorthand to describe ancestral Nepali-speakers (Bāhuns, Chhetrīs, and occupational castes) or their culture.

**pāthśālā**, school, especially one imparting traditional Sanskrit/Brahmanical education.

**pativratā dharma**, *pātivratya*, the duties of a faithful wife and their maintenance.

**Prajā Pariṣad**, underground democratic political party founded in Kathmandu in 1936 by Taṅka Prasād Āchārya, Daśarath Chand, Rām Hari Śarmā, Dharma Bhakta, and Jīv Rāj Śarmā; Taṅka Prasād escaped execution along with other political activists because he was a Brāhmaṇ, thus earning the title ‘living martyr’.

**pūjā**, act of worship.

**purāṇa**, a class of Sanskrit literature dealing with aspects of ancient history, legend, mythology, and theology; the *Mahābhārata*\* and *Rāmāyaṇa*\* epics are often classed with *purāṇas*.

**purohit**, family priest, Brāhmaṇ who is qualified to carry out *karma-kāṇḍa* rituals.

**pustakālaya**, library (‘abode of books’); often also used by Banaras publishers for ‘bookshop’.

**rāg**, a musical mode or sequence, harmony or melody.

**Rai** (*rāī*), umbrella term for a number of ethnic groups of eastern Nepal (cf. Kirāt\*)

speaking a variety of mutually unintelligible languages of the Kiranti branch of the Tibeto-Burman\* family; Rais form the largest group within the Nepali community of Darjeeling and, mainly through military service, have migrated to many parts of India and beyond; along with Limbus\*, they have provided the main community for Gurkha recruitment in eastern Nepal.

**raikar**, form of landownership in Nepal similar to freehold; land granted with direct title from the government; cf. *birtā\**, *jāgir\**, and *kipaṭ\**.

**rājgurū**, the personal spiritual advisor and priest to the King of Nepal and the highest religious authority in the country.

**Rāj Kumārī incident**, in 1927 the Banaras-based Nepali publisher and businessman Padmaprasād Upādhyaya (see Appendix 3) sold a Nepali girl named Rāj Kumārī for Rs. 1300 as a concubine to the Calcutta-based Marwari businessman Hīrālāl; Rāj Kumārī threw a written plea for help from his window to a passing Nepali, Khaḍga Bahādur Biṣṭa, who subsequently killed Hīrālāl and voluntarily surrendered himself to the police; his defence was that he had taken the only course possible to save the girl's honour; Ṭhākur Chandan Siṃh was instrumental in turning the Rāj Kumārī incident into a major *cause célèbre* through his newspaper *Gorkhā Saṃsār*, which published many articles on the issue as well as raising a significant fund for his defence and publishing the names of each of the many hundreds of contributors; he also organised a large public meeting on the subject in March 1927 in the Albert Hall, Calcutta.

**Rāmāyaṇa**, Sanskrit epic, attributed to Vālmīki, which tells of the deeds of Rāma; most famous among Nepalis in the rendition of Nepal's *ādikavi\** Bhānubhakta.

**rāmnāmī**, an item, usually a garment, with the name of Ram printed on it.

**rāmrajya**, the kingdom of Rām; used metaphorically to refer to an ideal world.

**Rāṇā**, name of the family or clan that ruled Nepal as hereditary Prime Ministers from Jaṅg Bahādur Rāṇā's assumption of power through the Kot massacre in 1846 until the power-sharing government of 1951; the Rāṇās in power during the period covered by this thesis were Chandra Śamśer (1901-1929), Bhīm Śamśer (1929-1932), Juddha Śamśer (1932-45).

**ras**, any of several tastes or sentiments characterising a literary work; traditional Sanskrit and Brajbhāṣā\* literary guides usually distinguish eight to ten of these; *ras* literally means 'juice' which adds an extra layer of meaning: when a work is said to contain *ras* (to be *rasamay*) it may also imply that it is exciting or engaging: this is even more so in the case of the colloquial Nepali *rasilo* ('juicy'), as in the title of Chhavikānta Upādhyāya's *Rasilo premlaharī* (1938).

**Rasik Samāj**, a Banaras-based Nepali literary organisation, composed mainly of students, which published the journal *Sundarī*.

**rāṣṭra**, nation, state; the standard modern term for nation, with derivatives such as *rāṣṭriya* (national) and *rāṣṭrabhāṣā* (national language); this word is notable for its rarity in early Nepali discourse (see 5.2.2); *rāṣṭriya ūtihās* is the convenient term used by Onta (1996b, 1996c) to designate the version of national history propagated by the Panchayat\* regime especially through the school curriculum and state media.

**ṛṣi**, a sage, especially one of the seven Vedic hymn-singers, or seer, saint or ascetic.

**ryot** (*raitī*), tenant or subject, particularly tenant cultivator; spelled variously in English and Nepali.

*sādhu bhāṣā*, old standard Bengali, gradually replaced by *chalit bhāṣā*\* in the early twentieth century.

**Śāh**, the Gorkha\* dynasty that unified Nepal and still reigns today; claims Rajput ancestry; major Śāh kings include Dravya Śāh (r. 1559-1570), who founded the dynasty; Rām Śāh (r. 1606-1633), who introduced a Hindu social code and also made military incursions into Tibet to protect trade routes; Pṛthvinārāyaṇ Śāh (r. 1743-1775), who is seen as the unifier and founder of modern Nepal; and Tribhuvan Vīr Vikram Śāh Dev (r. 1911-1955), on the throne for the entire period of this thesis and credited with helping to end the Rāṇā regime and introduce democracy in 1950-51, although no elections took place until 1959 and the short-lived experiment was ended by his successor Mahendra's introduction of the partyless Panchayat\* system.

*sāhitya*, literature, especially high literature.

*samāj*, society.

*samālochanā*, normally translated as 'criticism' but in early journals was used for 'review'.

*samasyāpūrti*, poetic riddles, used especially as a basis for public recitals and competitions (see Dalmia 1997: 282-83 or Orsini 2002: 33-34, 83-84 for the Hindi conventions); also used for poetry competitions run through Nepali journals.

*saṃskāra*, any of various essential sanctifying or purifying rites of passage (such as first feeding, marriage, funeral); in literary terms, suggests a taste, an inclination, and its source (e.g. whether inherited through family traditions or acquired through education, etc.; see Orsini 2002: 43-48).

*sanātana*, immemorial, eternal; *sanātana dharma* is orthodox Hindu belief and practice, involving acceptance of *śruti*\* and *smṛti*\*.

**Sardār Bahādur**, an honorary rank bestowed by the British Indian government on distinguished local figures.

*sarkār*, lord or government; the associated adjective is *sarkārī* (see 5.3).

**Sārki**, cobblers: see under *occupational castes*.

**Śarmā**, surname commonly adopted by Nepali Brāhmaṇs in preference to, or in addition to, traditional family names.

*śāstra*, a work dealing with religion or other branches of divine knowledge; treatise, scripture; as plural represents ancient Indian (especially Hindu) learning; *śāstrārtha* is doctrinal debate on the correct interpretation of religious texts; it came to bear the specific connotation of debate between an Ārya Samājī\* and a *sanātana*\* Hindu or a Vaiṣṇava\*, as in the famous debate organised by Ārya Samājī Mādhavrāj Joṣī in Prime Minister Chandra Śaṃsēr's presence in 1905.

*satī-sādhvī*, faithful and devoted (wife).

*savāī*, a popular metre for folk poetry (see 2.3.3); originally it comprised rhyming couplets in eleven-syllable lines with sixth and fifth syllable caesuras, but later *savāīs* were composed in *dohā*\* couplets; this genre was used for rapid political versification (Bandhu 2001/02b: 214): 'While democracy *savāīs* were created after the coming of democracy, so were Panchayat *savāīs* made after the coming of the Panchayat system. Those fighting for Gorkhaland also made their own *savāīs*.'

*sarkār*, government, ruling authority, master or lord (also used as respectful term of address).

*sevā*, service, especially in constructions such as *sāhitya-sevā* ('service to literature') or *deś-*

*sevā* ('service to [one's] country').

**Sherpa** (*śerpā*), 'people of the east' in Tibetan, Sherpas are an ethnic group from the high hills of north-east Nepal; originally migrants from Tibet they remain close to Tibetans in language, culture, and religious practice.

*śikṣā*, education.

*śloka*, a verse, especially a Sanskrit verse; specifically a Sanskrit couplet of sixteen-syllable lines; in folk Nepali formats (some of which preserve Sanskrit metres and some of which do not) known as *śilok*.

*smṛti*, the body of sacred and profane Hindu Sanskrit literature that is 'remembered' by mortals (as opposed to the divinely revealed *śruti*\*); it includes *purāṇas*\*, etc.

**Śrī**, literally prosperity, wealth, splendour and a title of the goddesses Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, it is used as an honorific prefix to a name (of a male deity, man, or sacred place); in Nepal, the Rāṇā Prime Minister was accorded three *śrīs* (*śrī tīn mahārāj*), the King five (*śrī pāñch mahārājādhirāj*), and the royal preceptor six (*śrī chha rājgurū*); derivative titles include **Śrīmān**/**Śrīyukta** (Mr), **Śrīmatī** (Mrs), **Suśrī** (Miss).

*śṛṅgār*, literally sexual passion, love, adornment or finery; in literature, romantic or erotic sentiment (*ras*\*), a genre much practised in Sanskrit, Brajbhāṣā\*, and Nepali (see 2.3.1); cf. *laharī sāhitya*\*.

*śruti*, the revealed texts of orthodox Hinduism (as opposed to the 'remembered' *śruti*\*), specifically the *vedas*\*.

*stotra*, a song or hymn of praise or recitation of virtues.

**Subedar** (*subedār*), a rank in both the Indian and Nepali armies equivalent to a British army Captain.

**SūDhaPā**, acronym referring to the established triumvirate of early language and literary activists in Darjeeling—Sūryavikram Jñavālī, Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā, and Pārasmaṇi Pradhān—formed by the initial syllables of their first names; on the origin of this acronym, coined in 1949, see Pradhān (1991: 276-77).

**Sunār**, goldsmiths: see under *occupational castes*.

*suruvāl*, see *daurā suruvāl*.

*sūtradhār*, the stage manager, a stock character in Sanskrit drama.

*svadeśī*, of one's own country (*svades*) as opposed to *videśī*\*; a term whose Nepal usage from the early twentieth century was conditioned by the Indian nationalist *svadeśī* movement (see 3.4.1).

*tāl*, musical time, rhythm.

**Tamang** (*tāmān*), a major Tibeto-Burman\* language speaking community concentrated in the hills to all sides of the Kathmandu Valley; while not traditional Gurkha\* recruits, they also form a significant proportion of the Darjeeling Nepali community; many Tamangs are relatively Hinduised but Darjeeling in particular, and more recently Nepal, has seen concerted efforts over many decades to reinforce Buddhist religion and identity among Tamangs; **Murmi** (*murmī*) is a now obsolete name for Tamangs used in British India.

*tapasyā*, ascetic fervour or practice.

**Tarai** (*tarāī*), the low-lying land at the foot of the Himalayas. Apart from various indigenous peoples such as the **Thāru**, the Tarai has a fully elaborated caste system—including far

more groups, especially occupational castes, than the hill system—reflecting that of the neighbouring Indian districts.

**thar**, caste, sub-caste, clan or community; the associated family or lineage appellation used as a surname or title.

**Tibeto-Burman**, linguistic group, including among others Tibetan, Newari\*, Magar\*, Gurung\*, Tamang\*, Rai\*, and Limbu\* languages; to describe speakers of these languages the long-winded ‘speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages’ is preferred to either the convenient but not widely established **Tibetoid/Tibetanoid/Tibetanid** (cf. Ramble 1997) or the outmoded and pejorative **Mongolian/Mongoloid** (rooted in colonial racial concepts but still surprisingly frequently used by writers in Nepali and English).

**tīthi**, lunar day, date of a lunar or solar month, especially as used in almanacs or astrological calculations, or to establish the correct dates for religious observances.

**ṭol**, quarter (of a town or village) or neighbourhood.

**ṭopī**, hat, cap, or hood.

**udyog**, effort or industry (in both the personal and large-scale industrial senses).

**unnati**, progress, advancement (see 3.2).

**upādhyāya**, a teacher or preceptor, as well as hereditary title of some Brāhmaṇs; cf. *āchārya\**.

**upanyās**, novel; the term was also used of early Nepali short stories.

**vaidya**, pertaining to Ayurvedic medicine; an Ayurvedic doctor; a Newar\* lineage name of hereditary doctors.

**Vaiṣṇava**, having to do with the god Viṣṇu, especially sects and individuals devoted to worshipping Viṣṇu, including Kṛṣṇa devotees; cf. *bhakti\**.

**vaṃśāvalī**, traditional genealogical chronicle of a royal family.

**varṇa**, class, type or caste; in particular the four classes into which Indo-Aryan society was divided from an early period (Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra); *varṇāśram* is the arrangement of the *varṇas*, the stages of life, and their respective duties and responsibilities according to *dharma\**.

**veda**, any of the four *vedas* that form the core of orthodox Hindu scripture; Vedic literature in general, including the *upaniṣads* and other interpretative and exegetical auxiliary works; *vedānta* refers to the *upaniṣads* collectively and in particular to a monistic philosophy and theology based on them.

**videśī**, foreign, foreigner.

**vidūṣaka**, the court jester, a stock character in Sanskrit drama.

**vidyā**, learning (see 3.2).

**vīr**, hero/heroic, brave, mighty, or (as a suffix) eminent; the derivative abstract noun *vīratā* encompasses heroism, courage, and fortitude; *vīrkālīn* (‘of the *vīr* period’) describes the early heroic poetry of eighteenth and nineteenth century Nepali (cf. Śreṣṭha 1990/91).

**viraha**, anguished separation of lovers; a traditional Sanskrit literary theme also adopted in Nepali.

**jug**, era, especially as in literary era; see *kāl vibhājan\**.

## Appendix 1

### The origins of Nepali communities in India

#### Banaras

Close ties between Nepal and the city of Banaras are still maintained to an extent today and certainly were of great significance until the overthrow of the Rāṇā regime in 1950/51. A Nepali community had long been established in the city, maintaining, among other institutions, its own temples. In fact, the documented history of links between Nepal and Banaras dates to at least the twelfth century:<sup>343</sup> a stone inscription (now in Nepal's National Museum) describes how a Śaiva Āchārya came to Nepal to initiate the royal princes. He visited twice (perhaps in 1104 and 1149), received donations from the kings and established temples in Kashi. In the fourteenth century the Nepal princesses Nāgadevī and Kāmākṣya Devī married Kashi princes. In the seventeenth century the influence of Kashi could be seen in the Kathmandu valley: Siddhi Narasiṃh established the Viśveśvar temple in Patan and made large donations, Pratāp Malla brought *gaṅgājāl* (sacred Ganges water) for the Rānī Pokharī ornamental lake in Kathmandu, and other Viśveśvar and Viśvanāth temples appeared around the valley.

From the latter half of the eighteenth century, a political aspect of the Nepal-Banaras relationship emerged. Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ Śāh visited Banaras at least once before his conquest of the Kathmandu valley, and used this trip to purchase some muskets (Stiller 1995: 74, citing the *Bhāṣā vaṃśāvalī*). It was the home in exile of the defeated king of Bhaktapur Rañjit Malla (who died at Maṇikarnikā Ghāṭ) and later, between his abdication (1799) and return to Kathmandu (1804), of Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ's grandson Raṇa Bahādur Śāh. Among his entourage there for some time was Bhīmsen Thāpā, the head of government of Nepal from 1806 to 1837.<sup>344</sup> Following the Kot massacre and Jang Bahadur's ascent to power, King Rājendra was persuaded to accompany his wife into temporary exile in Banaras.<sup>345</sup> Meanwhile many more Nepalis wanted to build temples in Kashi but faced problems with the government.

The famous 'Nepali temple' of Kashi (properly Samrājyeśvar Mahādev) dates from 1843, when it was probably built by Prince Surendra to commemorate his mother

<sup>343</sup> Except where otherwise indicated, these two paragraphs are based on information presented at the seminar 'Kashi as a Spiritual Centre for Nepal', by Martin Gaenzle and Nutan Dhar Sharma at the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, 2 March 2001.

<sup>344</sup> He was designated General and Prime Minister. See Whelpton (1991: 34-38), Regmi (1995: 10-11, 44-45).

<sup>345</sup> Landon (1928 vol. 1: 129-32) provides a readable account of the queen's unsuccessful plotting from Banaras.

(Rājendra's first wife), who had died in the Tarai while en route to Kashi in 1841. While *pūjā* is now performed by Nepali Sanskrit students who use the adjacent *dharamśālā* as a hostel, its priests used to be drawn from one Indian family of the 'Chhoṭā Nepāl' ('Little Nepal') area around Dūdh Vināyak to the north of Lalitā Ghāt. It was this 'Little Nepal' that became home to the most concentrated Nepali community in the city. Gaenszle and Sharma's research suggests that much of the population growth occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century, although it seems that there was some resident community in the area since before the construction of the temple.<sup>346</sup> 'Little Nepal' contained twelve *muhallās*, each of which traditionally had its own *mukhiyā*, gate and customs. Most of the families are Brāhmaṇ or Chhetrī and most of the current residents settled in Banaras 2-5 generations previously, in other words during or shortly before the period of this study. The reasons for migration were generally education, *kāśīvās*, and business.

One form of secular cultural link to Banaras is illustrated by the story of Lakṣmī Dās, a Newar who was the Nepal Darbar's Head Munshi from 1830 to 1846. Whelpton (1991: 130) records that 'according to the tradition preserved by his descendants today, he was the grandson of a prominent member of the aristocracy in the Newar Kingdom of Patan ... he himself was sent as a young boy to study Urdu and Persian in Banaras, where he attracted [subsequent Nepalese Prime Minister] Bhīmsen's attention during Raṇa Bahādur's exile.' While this family tradition is not supported by any evidence—and Whelpton provides an alternative description of his recruitment in Patna—the Nepal Darbar's use of Persian as its official language must have encouraged the maintenance of educational ties to north Indian cities.

In the late nineteenth century, Banaras was not only home to the customary circle of highly educated, primarily Brāhmaṇ, Nepali expatriates but formed for some time the centre of activism for the Hindi language led by the charismatic young writer, poet, speaker and publisher 'Bhāratendu' Hariśchandra. His efforts towards establishing *khaḍī bolī* Hindi directly inspired some Nepali activists to adopt similar goals and methods.<sup>347</sup> Gaenszle and Sharma also note that the Dūdh Vināyak area with which Motīrām Bhaṭṭa was also associated is near to Hariśchandra's home, lending added credence to reports of their close association. Nepalis also inhabited other areas in the city but the concentration in 'Little Nepal' contributed to what Gaenszle and Sharma characterise as 'intellectual fermentation'. The intellectual atmosphere must have been further intensified by the presence of large numbers of Nepali students from a range of backgrounds.<sup>348</sup> Banaras also became increasingly important as a centre of political opposition to the Rāṇā regime, especially in the latter decades of Rāṇā rule.<sup>349</sup>

<sup>346</sup> They estimate the current Nepali population of Banaras, including soldiers in the Cantonment, to be 50,000.

<sup>347</sup> The influence of Hariśchandra on Nepali contemporaries has been addressed at greater length in 2.1. *Khaḍī bolī* displaced other regional Hindi varieties with strong religious and literary traditions to establish itself as the modern standard (see glossary and 1.1.3).

<sup>348</sup> A 1918 appeal for funds for the Nepali Library (C1(1): 21) argued that 'there is a much greater need for an establishment of this sort in Kashi than in other places because poor students come to study there from all corners of the hills. It is impossible to describe their poverty.'

<sup>349</sup> On this see especially the recollections of Nepali Congress leader Viśveśvarprasād (B.P.) Koirālā (1914-1982) in Śarmā (1998; the English translation is Koirala 2001), Joshi and Rose (1966: 50-66), Husain (1970: 211), Mojumdar (1975: 25-27), Mishra (1985: 1-11). Fisher's work (1997) on

## Darjeeling

There is a long history of settlement of Nepalis in the eastern Himalaya beyond the current borders of Nepal.<sup>350</sup> It is believed that there were settlements of Limbus and Magars in Sikkim as early as the 1600s, although large scale population movement from Nepal did not start until the late eighteenth century (Hutt 1997a: 102-03).<sup>351</sup> These movements came at the time of, and partly as a consequence of, the rise to power of the Gorkha Śāhs and their conquests. Following the submission of the Kathmandu Valley in 1768-69, their expansionist aims initially took them eastwards. By 1780 Gorkhali forces had overrun the Darjeeling hills and western Sikkim. Further campaigns under the generalship of Amarsimh Thāpā extended their domains to the west across Kumaon, Garhwal and Kangra to the Sutlej river.<sup>352</sup> Subba (1989: 1) suggests that some Newar families emigrated from the Kathmandu valley to Sikkim immediately following Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ's victory; certainly the progress of the Gorkhali army some years later sent refugees ahead and brought not only troops but also camp followers into the newly enlarged Gorkha dominions. A Limbu manuscript collected by Brian Hodgson (long time British Resident in Kathmandu and scholar of Nepal's languages, peoples and religions) states that Khambu chiefs continued fighting against Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ but as 'no help came from the Limbu Kirats living beyond the Arun' many chiefs left for 'Mugalan' (reported by Pradhan 1991: 119).<sup>353</sup>

The rapid extension of Gorkhali control alarmed the East India Company which was itself engaged in reinforcing its hegemony in northern India (the Company's victory at Plassey in June 1757 came only one month after Pṛthvīnārāyaṇ's first—unsuccessful—attack on Kirtipur in the Kathmandu valley). As Gorkha conquests established an empire running almost the length of the northern extent of British control conflict became inevitable. Following a series of battles in 1814-16, Nepal was forced by the treaty of Sugauli to relinquish most of its annexed lands, its territory now delimited to the west and east by the Mahakali and Mechi rivers. In 1817 the treaty of Titalia restored to Sikkim the lands it had lost to Nepal some 37 years previously. Significantly for the future of Nepali

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Kathmandu democratic activist Ṭaika Prasād Āchārya provides many examples of the tensions between Kathmandu and Banaras-based political workers, and reproduces (268-79) some of Ṭaika Prasād's angry letters to B.P. On the political dimension of the Nepali public sphere in India see 4.3.3.

<sup>350</sup> This includes significant migration to Bhutan. Morris (RIGB: 12) noted that 'large numbers of Gurkhas have settled in Bhutan during the last sixty years'. While admitting that 'it is difficult to ascertain the reasons for the Nepalese deserting their own houses for this part of the world', he records that some had moved to find more fertile land, with almost all coming directly from eastern Nepal, and very few from Sikkim or Darjeeling (*ibid.*: 13-14). He estimates that 'the present number of Nepalese resident in Bhutan is probably not less than 60,000; but I personally believe it to be considerably more than this.' See Hutt (2003) for a fuller history of Nepali settlement in Bhutan.

<sup>351</sup> Gawler ([1873] 1987: 9) was given to understand that Limbus are native to Sikkim: 'the population of Sikkim is made up of several tribes; Lepchas and Limboos, who reside principally west of the Great Rungeet, are mild, inoffensive, hardworking, and fond of the English.'

<sup>352</sup> For two contrasting accounts of the Gorkha conquests see Stiller (1995) and Pradhan (1991).

<sup>353</sup> 'Mugalan' means India (see glossary). Subba (2002: 121) cites a June 1850 order regarding 'emigration from the Eastern Hill Region' from Prime Minister Jaṅg Bahādur Rāṇā: 'We have received reports that Limbus and Yakhās are leaving their *kipaṭ* lands and homesteads and migrating to Sikkim and Darjeeling. Find out why they are doing so, and keep them satisfied so that they may not do so in future. Do not allow any inhabitants of that area to go abroad.'

settlement in India, the British-Nepalese wars brought the fighting ability of 'Gorkha' soldiers to the attention of the British. Indeed the first Nepalis introduced into the British Indian army, some 4,500 men, were recruited in 1815 while the war was still continuing.

The Darjeeling hills were granted to British India by the Maharaja of Sikkim in 1835 and its establishment as a 'sanatorium' (*sic*) for recuperating Europeans also led to a large influx of Nepalis.<sup>354</sup> The completion of a basic road in 1839 signalled the start of serious settlement, construction and economic development (Pinn 1986). Nepali labourers were involved from the earliest stages as it was found that no other groups of people were able or willing to act as porters and work in the harsh hill conditions of Darjeeling. Pradhān (1982: 19) notes that as its development proceeded from 1839, movement of people between Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling was inevitable; also, that it is impossible to tell from contemporary reports how many Nepalis were in the district in these early stages. He is clear (*ibid.*: 21-22) about the presence of both pull and push factors on Nepali migration: 'while tales of gold growing on tree bushes and the possibilities shown by Darjeeling were attraction factors, repulsion factors (*vikarṣaṇ-tattva*) were also present in pushing them out of Nepal.'

Year	Population	Growth (absolute)	Growth (percentage)
1872	94,712		
1881	155,179	60,467	64
1891	223,314	68,135	44
1901	249,117	25,803	12
1911	265,550	16,433	7
1921	282,748	17,198	6
1931	319,635	36,887	13
1941	376,369	56,734	18

Table A1-1 Decennial Population Growth in Darjeeling 1872-1941 (adapted from Subba 1989: 12).<sup>355</sup>

The largest single 'pull factor' in attracting Nepali migrants was the establishment and rapid growth of the tea industry. First planted commercially in 1856, by 1901 tea production employed 64,000 coolies.<sup>356</sup> Even before the growth of the tea industry Pradhan

<sup>354</sup> The dubious tactics employed by Major Lloyd in extracting this grant from the Sikkim Maharaja are discussed by Subba (1992: 34-36). His apparent trickery has been one basis for claims (that still surface frequently for political reasons today) that Darjeeling should have been returned to Sikkim at Indian independence. A memorandum from the Government of Sikkim to this effect submitted a fortnight before independence summarises the arguments which, of course, India rejected ('Claims in respect of Darjeeling', in *Sikkim: Affairs and relations with India, Sep 1935 - Jun 1949*).

<sup>355</sup> Subba's source is Dash (1947:49). O'Malley (1907: 35) attributed much of the large growth in 1881 to 'the incompleteness and inaccuracy of the first census'. He also reports some pre-1872 estimates: that in 1835, the whole Darjeeling tract contained only 100 people; in 1850 Dr Campbell reported 10,000 inhabitants; and in 1869 a rough census found over 22,000.

<sup>356</sup> These figures are from census statistics quoted in O'Malley (1907: 121). A comprehensive account of the origins of the tea industry in India is provided by Griffith (1967).

(1991:192) estimates that 12-15% of eastern Nepal's Kirat population had emigrated to Darjeeling in 1840-60. Writing of Kalimpong, which he cites as a prime example of rapid population growth through the influx of agriculturalists, O'Malley (1907:37) attributes the influx of Nepalis to pressure on the land in east Nepal, poor agricultural and forest management, and the settlement of tea garden labourers who 'come with large savings and buy up good lands or clear holdings from the jungle'.<sup>357</sup> Of course, it was difficult for British officials, lacking access, surveys and census reports, to judge the situation in eastern Nepal. Pradhan (1991: 178) categorically rejects pressure on the land as a primary cause of emigration from Nepal, which he attributes more to oppression from an exploitative government.

Year	No. of gardens	Area (acres)	Output (lbs)	Employees
1866	39	10,000	433,000	
1870	56	11,000	1,700,000	8,000
1874	113	18,888	3,927,911	19,000
1885	175	38,499	9,090,298	
1895	186	48,692	11,714,551	
1901				64,000
1905	148	50,618	12,447,471	

Table A1-2 Development of the Darjeeling tea industry, 1866-1905, adapted from table and figures in O'Malley (1907: 74), 1901 figure is from the census listing for 'tea garden coolies' (*ibid.*: 121).

It is also hard to estimate how many migrants settled permanently in Darjeeling and how many may have just been temporary workers. In his *Handbook of Darjeeling*, Hathorn (1863: 150) comments that 'it is believed that the Government of Nepal prohibits their families from accompanying them into British Sikkim [Darjeeling]; they consequently are not strictly speaking residents: they come for a while, and then return to their homes to visit their families'. Changing patterns of landownership and usage were probably more significant as factors encouraging emigration than simple density of population (Caplan 1970, Pradhan 1991). It is hard to overestimate the importance of landownership in shaping the expansionist Gorkha campaigns and defining the administrative infrastructure of the newly enlarged kingdom. Pradhan (1991: 182) argues that this introduced a class aspect to caste/ethnic relations as the class of landed interests became more deeply entrenched both politically and economically. Similarly, the reform of land tenure systems was a major objective of Nepal's Rāṇā rulers as they attempted to concentrate power in a strong central administration. All of the major developments in government approaches to landownership have some bearing on pressures to emigrate from Nepal.

<sup>357</sup> Migration within India and the Nepal-Sikkim-Bhutan Himalaya is reflected in some phrases from an early Banaras-produced English primer for Nepali students (Dravid 1911: 6, 11): 'Where is your father nowadays? He is in Darjeeling', 'My eldest brother is in Nepal and my elder and younger brothers went to Bhootan.'

Place of birth	Population	Percentage
Bengal (including Darjeeling District)	218,935	68.5
Bihar	24,540	7.7
Sikkim	5,321	1.7
Elsewhere in India	8,277	2.6
Nepal	59,016	18.5
Elsewhere in Asia	2,052	0.6
Europe and miscellaneous	1,494	0.5
Total	319,635	100

Table A1-3 Origins of Darjeeling's population, 1931, adapted and corrected from Subba (1989: 13).

At the time of the Gorkha conquests, officers were not paid cash salaries but were granted rights over areas of land from which they were expected to support themselves and the men under their command. The state employed various tactics to convert communal *kipat* land to *raikar* status, often to the benefit of new Brāhmaṇ and Chhetrī settlers. Pradhan (1991: 189) sees this as part of a process, combined with other economic burdens such as state taxes, that led to large scale emigration from eastern Nepal: 'The conversion of *kipat* into *raikar*, and all the heavy taxation and impositions, indebtedness and bondage, slavery, unredeemable mortgages of land and their usurpations resulted in the emigration of the people from their ancestral land.' He argues (*ibid.*: 182) that the structure of landownership was inherently biased towards entrenching high-class dominance and excluding minority groups from power.<sup>358</sup> Such factors must have contributed to the predominance of members of Tibeto-Burman language speaking groups among emigrants from Nepal to Darjeeling. It is not that Brāhmaṇs and Chhetrīs were less prone to migration: large movements within Nepal (Pradhan 1991: 194) imply that migration within the state was simply more profitable.<sup>359</sup> A further push factor towards emigration may have

<sup>358</sup> Pradhan's polemic (1991: 178) is inspired by sympathy for common, especially non Bāhun-Chhetrī, people: 'When these oppressed people found the situation irremediable, they were left with no other alternative but migration to other places, either to some congenial place within or in most cases outside the kingdom. There are many documents which bear witness to the flight of peasants and other humble people.' Morris (RIGB: 16) claims that the best land in Samchi (heavily populated by Nepalis), and in his estimation similarly in Nepal, is gradually passing into the hands of Brāhmaṇs and Chhetrīs to the disadvantage of all 'Mongolian tribes': 'It seems to me that this question is intimately bound up with the present disinclination of Gurkhas to return to Nepal after completing their service.'

<sup>359</sup> This does not necessarily contradict Burghart but provides an extra perspective to his analysis of migration taking place within one's own country (*des*), with political allegiance having little bearing compared to traditional cultural geography. Certainly escape from previous rulers was very important for some early settlers from Sikkim in Darjeeling, and some eastern Nepalis at the time of the Gorkha conquests. Some also emigrated after being punished with loss of their lands or caste: here the promise of a fresh start must have been important. India offered at least some potential for social mobility, where people of low caste and marginalised ethnic groups probably had more opportunities for advancement than in Nepal (cf. Subba 1989: 5-7). This promise of social mobility and restructuring of hierarchical relations was at least partially fulfilled (see 4.4). Meanwhile Subba's analysis (*ibid.*: 6) that 'immigrants not only belonged to the lower castes but also lower classes' serves as a useful reminder that one should not conflate caste/class categories and hierarchies.

been the widespread famine in Nepal from 1863-66 which particularly affected the Tarai areas. As Regmi points out (1978: 154), the Nepalese government's belated and poorly funded attempts to provide aid to its famine-stricken citizens were rooted in self-interest: 'its concern apparently stemmed from the realization that dead people can pay no taxes'.

### The North-east and the western Himalayas

Pull factors for Nepali migration also included the growth of the coal and oil industries in India, as well as continued recruitment into the military, paramilitary and police forces. These factors drew Nepalis in particular to the north-east, while the establishment of Gurkha regimental centres in Kumaon and Garhwal led to the emergence of sizeable settled Nepali communities in towns such as Dehradun and Dharamsala. Oil was discovered in Digboi, Assam in 1889 and from the beginning almost all the labourers were Nepali (Bhandari 1996: 92). Meanwhile, recruitment of Nepalis into various branches of the Indian military, and their posting to different corners of the north-east of India, played an important role in dispersing settlements of Indian Nepalis. Nepalis were recruited into the Assam Light Infantry, formed in Cuttack in 1817 and transferred to Assam. Former Nepali soldiers of the 3rd Assam Rifles, Native Infantry Cachar Levy and Artillery force were posted to Nagaland and settled in Chanmari, Kohima. It is believed that Nepalis started settling in Manipur from the 1880s with postings of the 42<sup>nd</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Battalions (Bhandari 1996: 9-11). Only about one third of 11,000 Gurkhas discharged from the British Indian Army after the First World War chose to return to Nepal (Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon 1980: 37).

Service	Number
Indian Army	18,142
Imperial Service Troops	1,028
Military Police of Assam, Bengal and Burma	5,135
Total	24,205 (22,348 from Nepal)

Table A1-4 Nepalis employed in the Indian military in January 1913 (Pradhan 1991: 198, on the basis of Vansittart's *Handbook*).

Early Nepali organisations founded in Shillong included the Gorkhā Ṭhākurbārī (1824), a primarily religious association, and Gorkha Association (1886). The 8th Gurkha Rifles established an outpost at Umbai in the Khasi Hills in 1845 under the command of Subedar Deoraj Ale (Bhandari 1996: 12-13).<sup>360</sup> Rāṇā (2001: 60-71) reproduces interesting official correspondence from 1889-91 regarding the establishment of a 'Gurkha village', later designated 'regimental colony' near Shillong. A large increase in the permanent settlement of Nepalis in Shillong may have been spurred by the allotment of land to retired Nepali army personnel in the Jhalupara area by the Cantonment Authority in the aftermath of the

<sup>360</sup> In the western Himalaya, settlement was concentrated around Dharamsala (known in Nepali as Bhāgsu) and Dalhousie. The 1<sup>st</sup> Gurkha Rifles raised in 1815 near Simla became permanently stationed in Dharamsala and Bhandari (1996: 25) claims that Gorkhas had settled in the area since Amarsimh Thāpā besieged Kangra fort in 1805-09.

First World War (Newar 1988: 23). Unfortunately, Newar's social profile of Nepalis in Shillong, while examining interesting issues such as social and educational mobility, does not examine ethnic and caste composition of the community.

The 1901 census reveals that there were probably more than 20,000 Nepalis in Assam but figures are not available for Nagaland, Sylhet and the Mikir Hills (Bhandari 1996: 44). In fact, the imbalance between the numbers of male and female Nepali settlers in the hill districts that now fall within Meghalaya demonstrate clearly the predominance of men brought for employment unaccompanied by families. Thus in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District (which include the then state capital Shillong), Nepalis formed the largest group of those born outside Assam: 1,046 men and 248 women (Allen [1905] 1980: Section I, p. 118). In the Garo Hills District there were 557 men and 196 women (*ibid.*: Section II, p. 71), and in the Lushai Hills Nepalis were the largest single group of those born outside the District, more even than settlers from other parts of Assam: 1,234 men and 204 women (*ibid.*: Section III, p. 49).

Maṅsiṃh Guruṅ was the first Nepali graduate in Assam, earning a BA from Calcutta University in 1915. It was in this year that he visited Darjeeling and met, among others, Pārasmaṇi, who would later (1934: 30) credit him with leading the efforts, assisted by the Military Department, that saw Nepali gaining recognition at all levels of school education in Assam. In the western Himalayas, Dehradun was home to the first Nepali woman to gain an MA, Jayakalā Devī, Deputy Headmistress of the Kanyā Mahādevī Pāṭhśālā (Pradhān 1991: 327).

## Appendix 2

### Memberships of print and literary communities

The following sample records of membership of various print-based communities or literary-cultural associations provide some basic evidence of the social formations which coalesced around the Nepali language and related projects, of their composition, caste and ethnic diversity, geographical reach, and of the ways in which they represent some of the far-reaching social transformations traced in the thesis. They relate most directly to the discussion of social participation presented in Chapter 4.

Group, source, comment	Membership
<p>Contributors to a <i>samasyāpūrti</i> competition, Banaras 1907</p> <p><i>Source: Sundarī</i> 1(8): 75-78</p> <p><i>Comment:</i> almost exclusively <i>paṇḍits</i> (but a few <i>sāhus</i> may be Newars); some geographical diversity indicates <i>Sundarī</i>'s reach</p>	<p>Paṇḍit Kṛṣṇachandra (Gorkha), Kavi Śrī Kṛṣṇaprasād Regmī (Nepal), Paṇḍit Śrī Keśavprasād Śarmā Āchārya (Nepal), Śrī Gurūprasād Āchārya (Nepal), Sāhu Gaurīdās (Nepal), Paṇḍit Śrī Cakrapāṇi Śarmā (Nepal), Paṇḍit Śrī Chetnāth Śarmā (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Jānakīdatta Śarmā (Gorkha), Sāhu Jogbir Siṅ (Nepal), Paṇḍit Śrī Tīkārām Vāgle (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Dāmodar Śarmā (Nepal), Śrī D.R. Śarmā (Tulsipur), Paṇḍit Śrī Devnāth Śarmā (Nepal), Śrī Devrāj Śarmā (Jabalpur), Paṇḍit Śrī Nandalāl Tripāṭhī (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Nirvāṇakumār Śarmā Pokharyāl (Saptari), Śrīpīyūṣ (Prayag), Paṇḍit Śrī Bhadradvaj Śarmā (Nepal), Paṇḍit Śrī Bheṣṛājchandra Arjyāl (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Yadunāth Ghimire (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Rāmikumār Nepāl (Nepal), Paṇḍit Śrī Rāmchandra Joṣī (Kashi), Purohit Śrī Rāmprasād Satyāl (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Rāmbābū Śarmā (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Lekhnāth Śarmā Paudyāl (Saptari), Paṇḍit Śrī Viṣṇuprasād Śarmā (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Satyadhar Kvairālā (Pokhara), Sāhu Siddhidās (Kashi), Paṇḍit Śrī Śobhākar Śarmā Jīnevālī (Kashi), Pāṭhśālādhyāpak Paṇḍit Śrī Himnāth Pant (Nepal).</p>
<p>Donors to the Nepali Library and their contributions, Banaras 1915</p> <p><i>Source: Chandra</i> 1(7): 19-20</p> <p><i>Comment:</i> note the dominance of <i>paṇḍits</i></p>	<p>Paṇḍit Kṛṣṇaprasād Upādhyāya (Rs 10), Paṇḍit Lakṣmīnāth Upādhyāya (Rs 1), Paṇḍit Harihar Śarmā (<i>Citramay Jagat</i> and one copy of each of the books he had published), Paṇḍit Vāmdev Śarmā (one small cupboard and books), Paṇḍit Vasudev Śarmā (English weekly and books), Paṇḍit Divyanāth Śarmā (one chair), Bābū Mādhavprasād Regmī (one chair and books), Padmanābh Sāpkoṭā (<i>Indian Daily News</i>), Paṇḍit Kṛṣṇaprasād Śāstrī (one bench and 200 books), Bābū Mādhō Prasād (<i>Chandra</i> and a large picture of Emperor George V), Bābū Sūryavikram Jīnavālī (picture of deceased King of Nepal and books), Rāmśaṅkar Lāl (paper to print 1000 <i>nivedan patra</i>), Paṇḍit Janakprasād Koirālā (books), Paṇḍit Dharaṇīdhar Śarmā [Koirālā] (books), Paṇḍit Gaṅgānāth Śarmā (<i>Maryādā</i> Hindi monthly).</p>

*Chandrikā* subscribers who had encouraged friends to subscribe, Darjeeling 1918

*Source:* C1(6): 23-24

*Comment:* some notable geographic diversity

Paṇḍit Vaijanāth Śarmā Joṣī [Seḍhāim] (Nepal), Paṇḍit Kṛṣṇa Prasād Śarmā (Jaynagar), Paṇḍit Rudrarāj Pāṁḍe (Nepal), Paṇḍit Tārānāth Śarmā (Birganj), Dīnānāth Śarmā (Kashi), Hrasva Lāl Dīkṣit (Gangtok), Maṇisimh Guruṁḡ BA (Shillong), Hari Siṁḡ Thāpā Barmā (Darjeeling), Bābu Jagat Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (Singtam Tea Estate), Bābu Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bahādur Pradhān (Darjeeling Himalayan Railway), Purohit Rāmprasād Satyāl (Kashi), Hanjit Devān Rāi (Police Inspector, Darjeeling), Tej Bahādur Pradhān (Bārdiggi), Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (Pedong), Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān (Kalimpong), Sūrya Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (Kalimpong).

Some attendees at the fifth annual meeting of the Gorkha Library, Kurseong August 1918

*Source:* C1(8-9)

*Comment:* educated individuals predominate, one Muslim attendee

Dhan Prakāś Śāh (Chair), Hanjit Devān Rāi, Motīchand Pradhān BA, Kul Bahādur Pradhān, Hari Siṁḡ Thāpā Varmā, E.K. Pradhān, Mahā Siṁḡ Lāmā, Maṇi Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, Saiyad Śarif Ahmad, Śāhu Hariratna Pradhān Śākyabhīkṣu, Bābu Dhan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, Ṭik Bīr Rāi, Pahalmān Siṁḡ Chhetrī, Kīrtimān Pradhān, Rājimān Pradhān, Pārasmaṇi Pradhān, Kṛṣṇa Bahādur Pradhān, Vaś Bahādur Sardār, Subedār Harkabīr Thāpā.

Individuals involved in the Gorkha Library building project, Kurseong/Darjeeling 1918

*Source:* C1(6): 24, C1(7): 23, C1(8-9): 36-37, 39, 41-42, C1(10-11): inside frontispiece

*Comment:* diversity in ethnic origin (including non-Nepalis) and financial capacity

Major donors: Sardār Bahādur Lāmā (Rs 500), Kurseong Municipality (Rs 500), Kharsāṁḡ Jamgbīr Sardār (Rs 110), Rāy Śrī Rāmchandra Mantrī Bahādur (Rs 101), Dhan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (Rs 100), Dayāl Rāi (Rs 50), Yodā Rām Rikhrām [sic] (Rs 31), Koḍā Mal Jeṭhmalāṁ (Rs 31), Hanjit Divān Rāi (Rs 25), Phatte Chand (Rs 20), Ejrā Kāji Mān Pradhān (Rs 20), Jay Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (Rs 20), Mahāsiṁḡ Lāmā (Rs 5), Padri Saheb H. C. Mekkol [sic] (English books), Rāmamaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit (Nepali and Sanskrit books), Bengal government (government publications), Durgā Śamśer Pradhān (Rs 15), Pūrṇa Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (Rs 15), Laghurām Sardār (Rs 15), Maṇirām Nanurām (Rs 15), Moharsimh Hitarām (Rs 15), Sardār Yuddhabīr (Rs 15), Sardār Maitasimh Subbā (Rs 15), Bābu Ratna Bahādur Pradhān (Rs 15), Bābu Jamgesimh (Rs 18/12), Gaṇeś Dās Jīvan Rām (Rs 11), Viśveśvar Rām (Rs 11), Motī Chand Pradhān (Rs 20), Śāhu Hīrā Maṇi Śākya Bhīkṣu (Rs 10), Bābu Biljoti Śāhujī (Rs 2), Sardār Dal Mān Lāmā (Rs 5), Subedār Harkabīr Thāpā (Rs 5).

Chief assistants: (1) Bābu Hanjit Devān Rāi, (2) Bābu Dāmchhyoi Lāmā, (3) Bābu Bahādur Lāmā, (4) Bābu Dhan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, (5) Bābu Lāl Bihārī Thāpā (Gangtok), (6) Bābu Bhīm Bahādur Siṁḡ (Suke), (7) Bābu Jamge Siṁḡ Lāmā, (8) Bābu Pūrṇa Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, (9) Śrīyukta Pārasmaṇi Pradhān, (10) Bābu Sukmān Lāmā.

Some attendees at the fourth annual meeting of the Nepali Library, Banaras 1919

*Source:* C2(3): 87

*Comment:* note the continuing dominance of *paṇḍits*

Paṇḍit Kṛṣṇa Prasād Upādhyāy of Chandragaṅj (Chair), Lakṣmī Prasād Sāpkoṭā (Secretary), Harihar Śarmā, Paṇḍit Gaṁḡānāth Śarmā, Subbā Devī Prasād Sāpkoṭā, Paṇḍit Ānanda Nanda Śarmā, Paṇḍit Paśupati Bhaṇḍārī, Paṇḍit Tīrtha Prasād and Paṇḍit Kṛṣṇānanda Śāstrī.

Members of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, its Executive Committee, and individuals allotted recruitment responsibilities, Darjeeling 1931

*Source: NSSP (1)*

*Comment:* mix of class, caste and ethnic backgrounds; some executive officers were not members, indicating that they may not have been able to afford the fees; note geographical scope of Sammelan's activities

Permanent members: Subedar Major Jaslāl Rāi, Pedong, Rev. Father J. Dunel, Pedong, Śrī Rāmvaraṇ Thāpā, Pankhabari, Śrī R. L. Bhāratī, Nagri, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bahādur Basnet, Pakhrebung, Śrī Śambhunāth Rāi, Ging, Rāy Sāheb Hari Prasād Pradhān MA, BL, Darjeeling, Rev. K.S. Peters, Darjeeling, Sardār Bahādur Jañbīr Lāmā, Assam, Śrī Yuddhabīr, Kalimpong, Śrī Pārasmaṇi Pradhān, Darjeeling, Śrī Hanjit Devān, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Darjeeling. Ordinary members: Śrī Padmaprasād Pradhān BA, BL, Dr Madan Thāpā, Śrī Devī Dayāl Sukhānī, Honorary Lieutenant Govardhan Guruṅ, Śrī Padma Bahādur Chhetrī, Śrī Hastalāl Girī, Śrī Dhansimh Chhetrī, Śrī Sūryavikram Jñavālī BA, BT, Śrī Dharaṇīdhar Śarmā BA, BT, Śrī Gokul Simh Gahatrāj, Sub Deputy Magistrate, Darjeeling, Śrī Jagat Simh Lāmā, Śrī Chandrabahādur Kumāi BA, Śrī Harisimh Thāpā, Śrī Durgāśamśer Pradhān.

Executive Committee: Motīchand Pradhān, Hanjit Devān Rāi, Govardhan Guruṅ, Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā, Sūryavikram Jñavālī, Padmaprasād Pradhān, Dr Madan Thāpā, Chandrabahādur Kumāi, Kṛṣṇa Bahādur Guruṅ, Dhansimh Chhetrī, Rāmvaraṇ Thāpā, Jagat Simh Lāmā, Harkamān Rāi, Gokul Simh Gahatrāj, Hariprasād Pradhān.

Recruitment representatives and their areas: Harṣalāl Dīkṣit, Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān, Tshumbe Tshering (Kalimpong), Dr Indramān Rāi, Dr Viṣṇulāl, Gopāl Dās Pradhān (Pedong), Rāysaheb Ratna Bahādur Pradhān, Durgā Śamśer Pradhān (Renok), R.B. Rāi, Reśmī Prasād Āle (Gangtok), Rām Varaṇ Thāpā (Siliguri), Pūrṇa Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, S.N. Pradhān (Kurseong).

Officers elected to the Hill Peoples' Social Union at its inaugural meeting, Darjeeling 1934

*Source: Nebulā 1(1): 11*

*Comment:* note the dominance of professional, educationally qualified classes

Sardār Bahādur Laden La CBE, ADC (President), Sardār Bahādur Lieutenant Govardhan Guruṅ ADC and Dr Yen Simh KIH (Deputy Presidents), Rūp Nārāyaṇ Simh BA, BL (Secretary), Pārasmaṇi Pradhān FRGS and A.J. Devān BA (Joint Secretaries), Harkamān Rāi (Treasurer); Executive Committee Members: Sardār Bahādur Hanjit Devān Rāi, Motīchand Pradhān BA, Rev. Kalusingh Peters, Rai Saheb C. Tendupla, Dr Madan Thāpā LMS, LDSc, Kṛṣṇa Bahādur Guruṅ BSc, BT, Mr T Wangdi BA, BL, Chandrabahādur Kumāi BA, Indradev Simh, Mr W. D. Laden La, Kājīmān Rāi, Mānbahādur Thāpā, Lama Nima Norbu, Mr Tshumbe Tshering, Mr Luksujñān Pradhān, Mr N.B. Rāi.

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## Appendix 3

### Biographies

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This appendix presents basic information on some of the important Nepali writers, publishers, activists and patrons who feature in the thesis.<sup>361</sup> The biographical sketches combine information from a number of sources and aim to provide a convenient means of comparing the routes into public life taken by different actors. Thus sections on family background, education and career paths offer insights into how social and economic factors affected involvement in the world of letters. Given the importance of influences from other cultural spheres on Nepali writers, details of language competency are indicated for each subject. Major sources on each individual are listed, and significant factual disputes between sources are pointed out.

The individuals included are all male: it has not been possible to gather enough information on any of the early Nepali women writers to make meaningful entries. This is partly a shortcoming of my research but also a comment on the lack of secondary materials available that deal with these writers: as indicated in the thesis, most of their contributions have been almost entirely neglected by literary critics and historians. What relevant biographical information I have been able to obtain is thus included in the thesis itself. The more significant women authors whom I had hoped to include are Jayakalā Devī of Dehradun, the first Nepali woman to gain an MA, Deputy Headmistress of the Kanyā Mahādevī Pāṭhśālā (Pradhān 1991: 327); Kādambinī, composer of the poem ‘Vīr patnī ko sāhas’ which was an influence on the young Pārasmaṇi; Kumudinī, bold contributor to *Chandrikā*; Durgādevī Āchāryā Dīkṣit, wife of Harihar Āchāryā Dīkṣit (q.v.) who collaborated with her in the writing of *Dampatīdharma bhāryākartavya*; Vasundharā Devī and Yogmāyā Devī, both contributors to *Chandrikā*, Sāvitrī Devī of Kurseong, the most prominent Nepali woman freedom fighter, who was reportedly close to both Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose.

Biographical entries are given for the following:

Āchārya Dīkṣit, Harihar	Guruṅ, Maṇisimḥ
Āchārya Dīkṣit, Rāmamaṇi	Jñavālī, Sūryavikram
Āryāl, Kṛṣṇachandra Śarmā	Khativaḍā, Homnāth and Kedārnāth
Bhaṭṭa, Motīrām	Koirālā, Dharaṇīdhar
Dhuṅgyāl, Śambhuprasād	Lāmā, Pratimān Simḥ
Girī, Hastalāl	Lāmā, Santavīr
Guruṅ, Govardhan	Lāmā, Sardār Bahādur

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<sup>361</sup> This appendix was inspired by the similar presentation in Francesca Orsini’s *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940* (2002: 384-452).

Mitrasen, Māṣṭar	Śarmā, Tārānāth
Mukhiyā, Dhanvīr	Śarmā, Viśvarāj and Harihar
Pradhān, Gaṅgāprasād	Satyāl, Rāmprasād
Pradhān, Hariprasād	Sedhāim, Vaijanāth
Pradhān, Pārasmaṇi	Suvedī, Śikharnāth
Pradhān, Ratan Nārāyaṇ	Ṭhākur Chandan Siṃh
Rāi, Sardār Bahādur Hanjit Devān	Upādhyāya, Padmaprasād (and
Sāpkoṭā, Padmanābh	Puṇyaprasād)
Śarmā, Sadāśiva	

### Āchārya Dīkṣit, Harihar (1867/68-1930/31)

Political advisor, writer, publisher.

#### *Background*

Youngest son of Paṇḍit Śiromaṇi Āchārya Dīkṣit and father of Sāgarmaṇi. Born into one of Nepal's most prestigious Brahman lineages (the Āchāryas of Muḍkhu had adopted the Dīkṣit title since Śiromaṇi had achieved *dīkṣā* initiation in Banaras following the performance of a long-neglected *yajña*; for a convenient summary of male members of recent Āchārya Dīkṣit generations see Nepāl 1993: 189).

#### *Education*

Traditional Sanskritic.

#### *Languages*

Nepali, Sanskrit, Hindi, probably English.

#### *Career*

As an advisor to the short-lived Prime Minister Dev Śamśer he opted for voluntary exile from Nepal when Dev was expelled; known as 'Kānchhā paṇḍit' (the youngest (son) paṇḍit) he developed a great love for the Nepali language and engaged in publishing Nepali books from Banaras and Bombay; he founded the Gorkhā Granth Prachārak Maṇḍalī in Bombay which published several books of high quality but could not build a substantial readership or achieve commercial viability; as well as being a writer and translator himself he encouraged his wife Durgādevī to write and collaborated with her in the production of *Dampatīdharma bhāryākartavya* (1914); he is known for pure language, clean prose and presentation of *paurāṇik* subjects; his prose *Samkṣipta adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* was designed as a companion to Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

#### *Selected Works*

*Vidulā putrasaṃvād* (1908/09), *Śakuntalopākhyān* (1908/09), *Samkṣipta adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* (1909/10), *Prāchīn ra arvāchīn bhārat* (1913/14, incomplete).

#### *Major Sources*

Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1993/94: 189-90).

### Āchārya Dīkṣit, Rāmamaṇi (1883-1972)

Writer, publisher, language activist, critic.

### Background

Born Chaitra 1939 V.S., Pāṇḍhikī, Kathmandu; died 23 Māgh 2028 V.S., Kathmandu.

Eldest son of Kāśināth (known as ‘māhilā paṇḍit’) and his second wife Lalitādevī; born following Śiromaṇi’s return from Rāmeśvar pilgrimage he was initially named Rāmeśvarprasād; he grew up with his six younger brothers and two younger sisters in the palace of Vīr Śamśer, whose service his father had entered on returning from Banaras; his father became a close friend and trusted advisor to Bhīm Śamśer.

### Education

Started with private Sanskrit tuition at home by Nīlkaṇṭha Neupāne, a demanding teacher; from 1897/98 studied in Kashi with the most respected teachers and passed his primary examinations in Sanskrit; his paternal uncle Harihar (q.v.) wanted to teach him English but his grandfather insisted that he continue with Sanskrit; in 1899/1900 he was enrolled at Queen’s College on a scholarship, passed his intermediate examinations and also passed the first part of his *āchārya* examinations; he studied some English with a teacher and taught himself other languages; he returned to Nepal in 1900/01.

### Languages

Nepali, Sanskrit, English, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati.

### Career

Entered Commander-in-Chief Bhīm Śamśer’s service on return from Banaras in 1901; initially in charge of correspondence he became involved in all aspects of palace life and spent much of the day as Bhīm’s personal assistant and attendant; he fell out of favour and in 1903 managed to escape an unpleasant environment with the excuse of going to inspect the Prābhākārī printing press in Banaras which his uncles were running jointly (his second visit to the city); he took over the press when Harihar left for Bombay and developed an interest in the Nepali language; engaged in printing and promoting Nepali books he also became frustrated with overuse of the *halanta*, a complaint that would lead to a lifelong campaign; at this time he also started writing poetry and campaigning for Nepali to be given educational status; in 1908 he started the journal *Mādhavī* in Banaras with the help of Rāmprasād Satyāl and Kālidās Parājulī; this aimed to develop Nepali prose writing and also formed a platform for his campaign against the *halanta*; he made many contributions himself and also started collecting entries for a Nepali dictionary; he was excited by the Indian independence movement, subscribing to nationalist journals and travelling long distances to meet activists (including the Nepali Pirthiman Thapa); also travelled to various parts of India; when Chandra Śamśer learned of his activities he was forced to return to Nepal where (1909) he entered the service of King Pṛthvī with whom he developed a close relationship; on his death he asked Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl to write his *Śok pravāh*; in 1914 entered Chandra’s service and became a dedicated and trusted servant; in this year the Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti for which he had long petitioned was established and he became its first director (a post which he retained for nineteen years) and the single-handed manager and editor of most of its publication projects; as one of the conditions for its founding he also wrote a biography of Chandra (in 1915/16) which was translated into English by T.N. Ray and formed the basis for Perceval Landon’s *Nepal* (1928); during Chandra’s rule he remained a trusted intermediary between the two power centres of Siṃha Darbār and Nārāyaṇhiṭī; he encouraged other writers such as Lekhnāth (the only major contemporary poet he admired); his interests extended to other areas such as classical music and social work (for example, the Śānti Namūnā Mādhyamik Vidyālaya which he established in Mañigrām, Bhairahavā on land given to him by Chandra in gratitude for his

biography, is still functioning); after 1909 he established his own library, the Śānti Niketan Pustakālaya, and collected many manuscripts as well as more than eight thousand books. Within the space of four years (1933/34-1937/38) his mother, eldest wife and father died, the latter two in Banaras, where Rāmamaṇi had come on a seventeen day on foot following his mother's death; subsequently he became involved with the *Gorkhāpatra* and the Legal Reform Committee whose work spanned the end of the Rāṇā regime; his dogged and dogmatic commitment to the *halanta bahiṣkār* campaign led to clashes with many of his senior literary contemporaries such as the *rājgurū* Hemrāj Paṇḍit (who then tried to obstruct the GBPS's work) and also writers of later generations and left Rāmamaṇi feeling isolated from the literary community. When he retired from government service in 1951/52 he was denied a pension because of his interrupted employment and was only awarded a stipend as an aged servant of the Nepali language after petitioning B.P. Koirala; despite approaches to the Royal Nepal Academy and to King Mahendra, his *Maṇikoś* was never published. Married Kumudinī Devī at the age of 13, one son and three daughters; following his first wife's incapacitation by illness married Nalinī Devī in 1912/13, four sons and seven daughters.

### **Selected Works**

Nepāl (1993: 42-66) lists all of Rāmamaṇi's works and describes each one briefly, often including details of the circumstances of its production.

Published works include *Lāliya* (ed., 1912/13), *Sahyār-susār-sambhār* (1928/29), *Sādhāraṇ calitko auśadhī* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1928/29), *Abhinandan ra mantavya* (1953/54), *Pahilo bayān* (1953/54), *Bhalo kurāko namūnā* (1953/54), *Ek samikṣā* (1958/59), *Mātr boliko svāṅg* (1960/61), *Mātrbhāṣā* (1962/63), *Ukhān saṅgrah* (1970/71).

Unpublished works include *Kartavyatā parichay* (tr., ca. 1911), *Bhāṣā ra vyākaraṇ* (1942/43), *Nīti upadeś* (translation of *Pañchatantra*, 1943/44-1947/48), *Maṇi khalakko kathā* (ca. 1947), *Bhūl* (collection of essays from the years around 1947), *Dainikī* (diary, kept from 1910 until his death), *Maṇikoś* (dictionary, submitted for publication in 1961/62 but rejected by the Royal Nepal Academy).

### **Major Sources**

Nepāl (1993).

## **Āryāl (Arjyāl), Kṛṣṇachandra Śarmā (1882/83-ca. 1946)**

Editor, writer.

### **Background**

Born Siphāl, Kathmandu.

Son of Indramaṇi Arjyāl of Kamal Pokharī, Kathmandu.

### **Education**

'Necessary education' (according to *NLK*; no further information available).

### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, presumably Sanskrit.

### **Career**

Was a long time employee of the *Gorkhāpatra* and for some years its editor; was associated with Vaijanāth Seḍhāim in establishing the Gorkha Agency (publishing house, book distributors and general commercial import and marketing company) in Kathmandu

and collaborated with Sedhāim in various writing projects; he wrote and published much verse but played a more significant role in the development of Nepali prose, in which Śarmā Bhattarāi places him alongside the much better remembered Chakrapāṇi Chālise; his *Garvabhāñjan* takes an incident between Hanumān and Bhīm in the *Mahābhārata* as its theme while *Hāsyamukti* is derived from the *Ānanda rāmāyaṇa*; the latter (a slim work of fourteen pages) was published by Kathmandu's Pashupat Press and displays a rarely seen comic approach to episodes in the story of Rām; the *Laukik nyāyamaṇi mālā* was eventually published by Jagadamba Press, although the Gorkha Agency had been supposed to produce it; some of the stories it contains were published in the *Gorkhāpatra* in 1935-36.

### **Selected Works**

*Gorakhā-bhāṣā* (with Vaijanāth Sedhāim (q.v.), 1917), *Garvabhāñjan* (1917/18), *Śailabhakāmāñchal mātmya* (1918/19), *Vivāhasatak* (with Vaijanāth Sedhāim (q.v.), 1916/17 (?)), *Phal vijñān* (1937/38), *Hāsyamukti* (1939/40), *Laukik nyāyamaṇi mālā* (1959/60).

### **Major Sources**

Śarmā Bhattarāi (1993/94: 227-28), *NLK*.

## **Bhaṭṭa, Motīrām (1866-1896)**

Poet, biographer, dramatist, publisher.

### **Background**

Born Bhosi Tol, Kathmandu, Bhadau Auṃsī 1923 V.S.; died Kathmandu Bhadau Auṃsī 1953 V.S.

### **Education**

He was taken to Banaras at the age of five where he has a Sanskrit and Farsi education at Bhānu Mādhyamik Vidyālay; then he studied English for one year in Kathmandu (1881/82) and subsequently for another year in Banaras; having returned to Kathmandu in 1887/88 he spent one year at Darbar High School (1890/91) before passing Matriculation Examination in Calcutta in 1891/92; in 1893/94 he failed his F.A. examinations in Calcutta and it was when he sat them again in 1895/96 that he caught the illness which led to his untimely death.

### **Languages**

Nepali, Sanskrit, Farsi, Hindi, Urdu, English.

### **Career**

He started writing from the age of fifteen and spent his most productive years in literary terms in Banaras where he was associated with the leading Hindi writer, publisher and activist Hariśchandra; was a talented writer who turned his hand to many genres, including the composition of *śṛṅgār* poetry, *gazals*, humorous verse, *kāvya*; he was instrumental in making the *samasyāpūrti* format beloved of Hindi *kavi sammelans* and journals popular in Nepali; his modern style and eclectic influences set him apart from his predecessor Bhānubhakta; comfortable using complex Sanskrit metres and traditional Sanskritic themes (in particular amorous ones) he also transposed the Urdu *gazal* into Nepali, displayed the influence of his early enthusiasm for Farsi love poetry, and used large amounts of English vocabulary in some short poems (especially in the collection *Saṅgūchandroday*) for humorous or stylistic effect; he is commonly believed to have founded the first Nepali periodical, *Gorkhā Bhārat Jīvan*, in association with the Hindi publisher Rāmkr̥ṣṇa

Varmā's Bharat Jivan press (he had already persuaded Varmā to start publishing Nepali books, which Varmā continued to do even after Motīrām's death) although evidence now suggests this was predated by Ḍamaruvallabh's *Gorkhā Samchārptra*; a distinctive feature of his work is that he was not a solitary writer but fostered and cultivated a small literary community, his Banaras *samasyāpūrti maṇḍalī* including poets such as Padmavilās Pant, Kāśīnāth, Raṅganāth, Chetsim and Tejbahādur Rānā, and his Kathmandu circle Naradev Pāṇḍe (later to write his biography), Lakṣmīdatta Pant, Gopīnāth Lohanī and Rājīvalochan; he is most famous as the biographer of Bhānubhakta and editor/publisher of his *Rāmāyaṇa*; largely because of this he is widely recognised as one of the founders of modern Nepali literature and given the status of *rāṣṭriya vibhūti* (national hero) in Nepal, although Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi argues convincingly that others such as the Viśvarāj and Harihar Śarmā (q.v.) played an equally significant role in establishing modern literary production. Married in Kathmandu in 1880/81.

### **Selected Works**

Composed between 1883-86: *Gaphāṣṭak* (a collection of humorous poems), *Pañchakrapaṇcha* (kāvyā, published in 1887/88), *Bhramargīt*, *Śakunautī*, *apnādhyāy*, *Gajendra mokṣa*, *Uṣācharitra* (kāvyā). *Manodveg pravāh* (poetry collection, perhaps composed ca. 1886), *Priyadarśikā* (drama, published 1959/60), *Saṅgītachandrodaya* (gazal collection, published 1927), *Pikadūt* (kāvyā), *Kamal bhramarsaṃvād* (kāvyā), *Bhānubhaktācharyako jīvancharitra* (1891), *Prahlād bhaktikathā* (kāvyā, 1891/92), *Bhānubhaktīya rāmāyaṇa* (ed., published 1887/88).

Unpublished lost works reportedly include *Śakuntalā*, *Padmāvātī*, *Chāṇakyanīti*, *Anuprās mañjarī*, *Gulsanovar*, *Ukhānko bakhān* and *Kāśīrāj chandrasen*.

### **Major Sources**

Barāl (1998c), Śarmā (1994/95: 51-53), *NLK*.

## **Ḍhuṅgyāl, Śambhuprasād (1890-1929)**

Poet, professional writer, editor, printing press manager.

### **Background**

Born Chaitra kṛṣṇa ekādaśī 1946 V.S., Bhāṭbhaṭenī, Kathmandu; died 1929 (Bhādra kṛṣṇāṣṭamī 1986 V.S.), Kathmandu (date of death still disputed).

Only son of Devīramaṇ Ḍhuṅgyāl, whose parents had moved to Kathmandu from rural east Nepal; Devīramaṇ was a government servant appointed as Subbā in the Tarai; his father lost his job in 1909/10 and died in 1912/13 leaving Śambhuprasād with responsibility for his entire family; nephew of respected contemporary scholar and poet Chhivilāl Sūri.

### **Education**

Traditional Sanskrit education at home; while living with his father in Hanumānnagar and Birgañj gained informal education in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and English.

### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, Urdu, Newari, Sanskrit, English, Bengali (composed in all of them).

### **Career**

One of the most talented writers of his generation, Śambhuprasād's life was marred by poverty, ill health and a series of personal tragedies; married at the age of twelve and steeped in the tradition of *śṛṅgār* poetry, started writing seriously from fifteen, when he

revised Motīrām Bhaṭṭa's (q.v.) *Pañchak prapañcha*; he contributed various *samasyāpūrtis* to *Sundarī* and started writing other verses; his father lost his job in ca. 1909 and for the next few years in Kathmandu Śambhuprasād was too busy helping him out to write poetry; as he published more he rapidly gained renown for his poetic talent, and his skill at instant composition led to his title of *āsukavi*; to ease his financial situation he ingratiated himself with Prime Minister Chandra Śamser (composing the *Śrī chandrapratāp varṇan* in 1913/14) and managed, with the help of Kāśīnāth Āchārya Dīkṣit and Umādev Pant, to get appointed as head (*mukhiyā*) of the customs office; however his reformist views brought him into conflict with the authorities and the 1920 *makai parva* (see Glossary) gave them an opportunity to dismiss him; he headed to Banaras to seek employment; was a regular contributor to, and correspondent for, *Gorkhālī* and *Chandrikā*; he worked in Banaras for eight years, mainly in Padmaprasād Upādhyāya's (q.v.) firm, and wrote many books to order as well as his own compositions; while his skills as a poet are better remembered (and reinforced by the *āsukavi* title), his contribution to the field of popular narrative was perhaps more remarkable—he wrote, revised, translated, or edited versions of almost all the most popular tales: *Bīrbal vilās*, *Sunkesarī rānīko kathā* (1921/22), *Hātīmatāiko kathā* (1924/25), (*Satya*) *Madhumālatīko kathā* (ca. 1924), *Gulābkāvalī* (1924/25), *Siṃhāsanbattīsī* (1925/26), *Amolā maiyāṃko kathā* (ca. 1925/26), *Śuksāgar* (ca. 1924/25), *Vīrsikkā*, and *Totāmainā (āṭh bhāg)* (1927/28); during his stay in Banaras his three sons all died and then Padmaprasād's business collapsed; dispirited, he decided to return to Kathmandu; when various panegyrics were still not enough to placate Chandra Śamser he published a loyalist journal called *Rājbhakti* and gained permission to return; he fell ill and died shortly after arriving in Kathmandu.

### **Selected Works**

*Chandravadīnī* (1914/15), *Ratnāvalī* (published 1915/16), *Śakuntalā* (1916/17), *Bīrbal vilās* (various parts and editions; 1916 onwards), *Kṛṣṇa charitra* (1917/18), *Vidyāsundar* (1918), *Śrīmadbhāgavata-kṛṣṇacharitra* (1918), *Śambhu bhajanmālā* (1919/20), *Mahābhārata droṇaparva* (1924), *Veśyāvarṇan* (1926/27), *Maitālu chhorīko kathā* (1926/27), *Mālatīmādhav* (ca. 1929).

### **Major Sources**

Bhaṭṭarāī (1980/81), Barāl (1998d), Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 203-17, 1999/2000b: 37-62).

## **Girī, Hastalāl**

### **Background**

Born in eastern Nepal.

An economic migrant to Darjeeling from a poor family.

### **Education**

Minimal, if any.

### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, some English.

### **Career**

Found employment in Darjeeling's Lewis Jubilee Sanatorium, where he rose through the ranks eventually to become Steward, a position of some authority; helped Dhanvīr Mukhiyā to form the Gorkha National Theatrical Party and stage plays; later was

instrumental in organising the first public Sarasvatī *pūjās* performed by Darjeeling's Nepali community; became an active member of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan's executive committee following his election in July 1934; eventually managed to build a few houses next door to the Sanatorium and rent them out to ensure his financial security; in honour of Harisimh Thāpā and Hastalāl the book series of which Sūryavikram's new edition of Raghunāth's *Sundar kāṇḍa* was the first volume was titled 'Harihasta granthamālā'.

#### **Major Sources**

Rāi (1984), Jñavālī (1998).

#### **Guruñ, Govardhan**

Soldier, community leader.

#### **Background**

No information available.

#### **Languages**

Nepali, English, Hindi, Bengali.

#### **Career**

Served with distinction in the Indian Army and retired with the rank of Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel; he settled in Darjeeling and was appointed aide-de-camp to the Governor-General of Bengal; was mentioned in George V's New Year's honours of 1935, and by that time was President of the Gorkha Officers Association and Darjeeling's Gorkha Association (at his insistence the erstwhile Gorkha Samiti changed its name to 'Association' prompted by the British government's objection to the connotations of 'samiti'); he was also a senior official or member of some ten other organisations; he was one of the signatories to the joint petition for separate administrative status for Darjeeling in 1930 and to the Hillmen's Association's separate memorandum to the same effect in 1934; he was instrumental in establishing the Hill-Peoples' Social Union and was a member of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan's executive committee; he was a leading member of the group who established the settlement of Paśupatinagar, on the Nepal side of the border with Darjeeling

#### **Major Sources**

*Nebulā* (1(1): 9), Rāi (1984: 9).

#### **Guruñ, Maṇisimh (1892/93-1967/68)**

Publisher, writer, educator.

#### **Background**

Born in Shillong, his father was in military service.

#### **Education**

BA from Calcutta University 1915 (the first Nepali graduate from Assam).

#### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, Bengali, English.

**Career**

The first Nepali from Assam to gain a BA; visited Darjeeling in 1915 and met, among others, Pārasmaṇi; published Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā's *Naivedya* and *Pañchāmṛta* in Banaras in 1920; founded, edited and published the journal *Gorkhā Sevak* (1935-1938) from Shillong, as Secretary of Shillong's Gorkhā Pāṭhśālā oversaw its upgrading to Middle School status (the school had originally been established as a library-cum-tuition centre in 1876); led the efforts, assisted by the Military Department, that saw Nepali gaining recognition at all levels of school education in Assam.

**Selected Works**

His writings appeared in journals including *Gorkhālī*, *Chandrikā*, *Gorkhā Saṃsār*, *Taruṇ Gorkhā*, *Himalayan Times*, *Asamvārī*.

**Major Sources**

Rana (2001), *NSSP*, *NLK*.

**Jñavālī, Sūryavikram (1897-1985)**

Teacher, writer, historian, critic, academician, translator.

**Background**

Born May 1897, Maṅgalāgaurī Ṭol, Banaras; died December 1985, Kathmandu.

Only son of Tilvikram and Pārvatīdevī Jñavālī (his one younger brother died in childhood).

**Education**

Primary education in his *ṭol* in a school run by the Marathi community, secondary education in Banaras in Hariśchandra Uchcha Vidyālaya, Hindu School, and then Central Hindu Collegiate School from which he matriculated in 1916; IA from Banaras Hindu College; BA (with distinction, 1926) and BT (First Division, 1928) from Calcutta University (self-taught while working in Darjeeling Government High School).

**Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Bengali.

**Career**

Editor and publisher of *Gorkhālī* (1915-17, although editorial work was generally shared between Devīprasād Sāpkoṭā, Kṛṣṇaprasād Koirālā and Śivaprasād Regmī) and then of *Janmabhūmi* (1922), a solo effort which published only four issues before he moved to Darjeeling and closed it; sub-editor on the Banaras Hindi daily *Āj* (1920-21) and the Allahabad English daily *Leader* (1921-22); Nepali and latterly English and history teacher and subsequently Headmaster of Darjeeling High School 1923-54; became a close associate of Pārasmaṇi and Dharaṇīdhar while in Darjeeling; founder Secretary of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan; member of Darjeeling Municipality and Chairman, Education Committee 1946-50; Darjeeling District Social Education Officer 1955-59; moved in 1959 to Kathmandu where he became Member-Secretary of the Royal Nepal Academy (1959-71) and subsequently Honorary Life Member (from 1971) and then Chancellor (1974-79); nominated member of the National Panchayat 1962-66, Cultural Attaché, Royal Nepalese Embassy, New Delhi 1967-69; member of the Madan Puraskār Guṭhī advisory committee; member, Tribhuvan University Service Commission 1973-74; Member, Press Council (Nepal) 1972-74; twice visited USSR and spent 1963-64 as a Fulbright Visiting

Professor in the USA; recipient of the Tribhuvan Puraskār and the Prthvī Prajñā Puraskār as well as decorations from the governments of both India and Nepal.

### **Selected Works**

Many essays in journals such as *Chandra* (his first published article was on Socrates, 1(5), January 1915), *Chandrikā* and the *Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan Patrikā*; biographies include *Dravya śāh* (1933), *Rām śāh* (1933), *Prthvīnārāyaṇ śāh* (1935), *Vīr balbhadrā* (1940), *Amarsimh thāpā* (1943, Hindi edition 1951), *Nepālī vīrharū* (1949); other works include *Bhānubhaktako rāmāyaṇa* (ed., 1933), the first collection of Nepali short stories *Kathā kusum* (ed., 1938), *Bhānubhaktako jīvan charitra* (edited with introduction 1927), *Bhānubhakta smārak grantha* (ed., 1940), *Nepālī bhāṣāko vikāsko saṃkṣipta itihās* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1956), *Nepāl upatyakāko madhyakālīn itihās* (1962), *Nepālī śāh vaṃśīya rājāharū* (1975), *Itihāskā kurā* (1977), *Sūryavikram jñāvālīkā pachhillā kehī lekharū* (ed. by Jagat Chhetri, 1998).

### **Major Sources**

Jñāvālī (1998), Prasāī (2000/01).

## **Khativaḍā (Upādhyāya), Subbā Homnāth (1854/55-1927/28) and Kedārnāth (1878/79-1946/47)**

Civil servant (Homnāth), writers, publishers.

### **Background**

Both born in Kathmandu; died in Banaras.

Homnāth was the ‘milk-brother’ of King Trailokya Vikram (i.e., the son of his wet-nurse); Kedārnāth was Homnāth’s son.

### **Education**

Homnāth: basic Sanskrit and English education. Kedārnāth may have received a more advanced education as he grew up in Banaras, where there were plentiful opportunities and his father was able to afford to school him.

### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, Sanskrit, English.

### **Career**

Homnāth entered the Nepal civil service following his education and gained rank of Subbā; exiled from Nepal in the “Rājākāī parva” of 1881/82 and devoted his first years in Banaras to political intrigue; according to his grandson Narendra Śarmā Khativaḍā, Homnāth’s brother Ṭaṅka Prasād established his Hitaishi Company in Calcutta in 1886 and Homnāth started publishing shortly afterwards; in an advertisement on one of his publications (*Śrīgār-darpaṇ* 1928) he describes himself as ‘the king of verse books that have now been in circulation for forty years’ which implies that he had been publishing since ca. 1888 (and *Statements of Publications* for the third quarter of 1895 include his *Rāmāśvasmedha*, though this was published and copyrighted by Māyā Gaj Kumārī). His publishing house (Homnāth Kedārnāth) became one of the most successful and prominent among Banaras-based Nepalis; he was also successful as a writer: his *Rāmāśvamedha* came to be seen as the eighth *kāṇḍa* (section) of Bhānubhakta’s *Rāmāyaṇa* and the popularity of his 1000-*śloka* Nepali verse adaptation of the *Mahābhārata*’s *Virāṭ parva* is demonstrated (according to Tārānāth Śarmā) by the fact that Nepali people ‘still recite the *Kālikāstuti*

from it morning and evening'; Bhaṭṭarāi claims that his poetry was particularly popular among a rural audience, being generally simple and full of *ras*.

Kedārnāth worked in his father's company and became its manager but was also a noted writer in his own right, particularly well known for his Nepali renderings of many *parvas* of the *Mahābhārata*; in total he translated and published nearly 7,000 *ślokas*.

#### **Selected Works**

Homnāth: *Rāmāśvasmedha* (1895), *Virāṭparva* (1906/07), *Sabhāparva* (1906/07), *Nṛgacharitra* (1906/07), *Kṛṣṇacharitra* (ca. 1908/09).

Kedārnāth: *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā*, *Anuśāsan parva*, *Aśvamedha parva*, *Āśramvāsī parva*, *Karṇa parva*, *Gadā parva*, *Droṇa parva*, *Mahābhārata vanaparva*, *Mahābhārata sampūrṇa*, *Charitrasaṅgraha*, *Naladamayantī*, *Satyanārāyaṇa vratākathā*.

#### **Major Sources**

*NLK*, Tārānāth Śarmā (1994/95: 57), Bhaṭṭarāi (1988/89: 16-27, 209-18), Martin Gaenszle and Nutan Sharma (personal communication).

### **Koirālā, Dharaṇīdhar (1892/93-1979/80)**

Teacher, writer, translator.

#### **Background**

Born 1892/93 (according to Devīprasād Sapkota, 24 Māgh according to Tārānāth Śarmā; 1883/84 according to Chandra Pratāp Pradhān), Dumjā, Rāmechhāp; died 1979/80, Kathmandu.

#### **Education**

Came at an early age to Banaras for study (Sanskrit and English); studied Sanskrit literature in Calcutta University, then English as far as BA though could not sit exams through illness; then gained BA and BT in Banaras.

#### **Languages**

Nepali, Sanskrit, English, good knowledge of Bengali, Marathi, Kumauni and Hindi.

#### **Career**

Joined Darjeeling Government High School as a teacher of Nepali and became a close associate of Pārasmaṇi and Sūryavikram (whom he had first met in Banaras); ran a Gorkha Literature Society at the school; involved in cultural organisations such as the Kurseong Gorkha Library, the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan and the Gorkhā Samiti and one of the founders of the Manvinod Pustakālaya in Darjeeling's Judge Bazaar; he rose to become the Headmaster of the Government High School and director of public education in Darjeeling District; he remained involved in local cultural and religious projects, for example as one of the leaders of the effort to build the Dhīr Dhām temple in Darjeeling which was consecrated in 1939; his poetry, other writings and social activities were informed by a profound religious belief and commitment to public morality and the elimination of social vices; this also informed his response to the Rāj Kumārī case and Khaḍgabahādur Biṣṭa's action in his poem 'Khaḍgaprasaṅga' published in *Gorkhā Saṃsār*; following his retirement he spent the latter part of his life in Kathmandu; awarded an honorary doctorate from Tribhuvan University, as well as the Tribhuvan Puraskār (1965/66) and honorary life membership of the Royal Nepal Academy; he is still best remembered for his early poem 'Udbodhan (jāga jāga)' (1918b) and his first poetry

collection *Naivedya*; many recent historians have read ‘Udbodhan (jāga jāga)’ as an anti-Rāṇā revolutionary poem but Dharaṇīdhar’s concerns were social rather than explicitly political.

#### **Selected Works**

First poems published in *Gorkhālī*, *Naivedya* (1920), *Pañchāmṛta* (1920), later poetry collection *Spandan* (1952/53), Nepali translation of *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā* (1934/35).

#### **Major Sources**

Mohan Koirālā (1992/93), Tārānāth Śarmā (1994/95: 103), *NLK*.

### **Lāmā, Pratimān Siṃh (1890-1946)**

Writer, novelist, political activist.

#### **Background**

Born in Ṭekbīr Bastī, Kurseong, into an established local family who owned farmland in Siliguri.

#### **Education**

At Kurseong Middle School was a pupil of Ratan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān (q.v.); passed Matriculation examination.

#### **Languages**

Nepali, English, Hindi, Bengali.

#### **Career**

Although not educated to tertiary level, Lāmā was an autodidact who established a library in his home and was a voracious reader of political periodicals in various languages as well as an enthusiast for world history; he contributed to *Chandrikā* and also wrote a detective novel, no doubt influenced by the popularity of the genre in Hindi; he was resident for some time in Jalpaiguri as well as Kurseong, working as a ranger in the Vaikuṇṭhapur Rāj Forest (appointed 1912); he seems to have been politically aware from an early age and it is reported that he would argue with his superior, the Divisional Forest Officer, while working as a ranger in Suknā; when invited to a district meeting called by the British authorities in 1921 to mobilise local support against the independence movement he refused to attend; shortly afterwards he resigned his post because of his political views (probably the first Nepali to make such a principled protest) to give more time to political organisation; he devoted himself to nationalist politics and was a leading local figure in the Quit India movement, working under Dal Bahādur Girī; was confined to Kurseong after organising a meeting to protest Gandhi’s arrest in 1922; with the arrival in Kurseong of the enthusiastic young activist Sūrjaprasād Poddar (originally of Bihar) in 1935 Lāmā’s organisational work for Congress gained new momentum and they built up the local committee; when electoral politics came to Darjeeling in 1937 he became President of the Kurseong Congress Committee; from 1938-1941 he was elected Secretary of the District Congress Committee; during the Quit India movement of 1942 he borrowed money to help poor arrested activists and ultimately had to sell his land to clear the debts he incurred; despite his rich origins he was eventually forced even to sell his ancestral home in Kurseong; his financial destitution contributed to a rapid decline in his physical and mental health and he died eight months before Independence; the father of four sons, his funeral was conducted in nationalist style under the Congress tricolour flag.

**Selected Works**

His detective novel *Mahākāl jāsūs* was published by the Hari Printing Press in August 1918; he published essays in *Chandrikā* and other journals, also contributing at least one English article ('Should hillmen join politics?') to *Young India*.

**Major Sources**

M.P. Rāi (1992: 117-21), Śarmā (1976: 19-20); Ajīt 'Nirāśā' (1976), Bhandari (1996).

**Lāmā, Santavīr (1897/98-1969/70)**

Writer and researcher, philanthropist, patron of the arts.

**Background**

Born Ilām, Nepal.

Son of Kālusiṃh Lāmā.

**Education**

Left home at fourteen to work in trade and commerce.

**Languages**

Tamang, Nepali, probably English, Hindi, Bengali.

**Career**

Settled in Sukiā Pokharī, Darjeeling District; Nepal's government twice had him arrested in India and attempted to have him extradited but failed on both occasions; he was probably the first of many Nepalis to be arrested on charges of conspiring against the Rana regime, others later included Sūryavikram, Dharaṅḍhar and Hariprasād Pradhān though all were eventually released without charge; Lāmā sponsored the publication of Sūryavikram's biography *Rām śāh* by the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan in 1933; he established schools both in Sukiā Pokharī and in the village of his birth in Nepal; he also built Buddhist monasteries in Ilām and Darjeeling (Tīndhāriā) as well as a Śiva temple in Jhāpā, east Nepal; wrote many books on Tamang language, culture and religious practice; maintained friendships with various senior Indian political leaders, some of whom he had first encountered in prison; he was appointed Baḍā Hākīm (governor) of Ilām by King Mahendra, and on his retirement from that position was made an honorary colonel.

**Selected Works**

*Nāngavā sāngai* (1956/57), *Sevusemu* (1959/60), *Tāmavākaiten hāi rimṭhim* (1959/60), *Ilām darpaṇ* (1959/60).

**Major Sources**

Jñavālī (1998), *NLK*.

**Lāmā, Sardār Bahādur (1883-1932)**

Businessman and philanthropist.

**Background**

Born Lebung, Darjeeling; died 15 April 1932 in Assam.

Born into a wealthy family, son of Tendup Lāmā and Gorī Sardārñī.

**Education**

Unknown, but presumably of high quality given his parents' means.

**Languages**

Nepali, English, probably Hindi and Bengali.

**Career**

Spent his youth indulging in the pleasures of the rich: horse-riding, hunting, breeding dogs and other animals; his business interests included coal mining; he counted senior local figures such as Hanjit Devān Rāi (q.v.) among his closest friends; he developed a keen interest in literature and built up his own library as well as donating many books to the Kurseong Gorkha Library and the Tamang monastery; was also an enthusiastic sportsman, endowing various cups, and supporter of music and theatre who would arrange to bring musicians from far afield to perform in Darjeeling; his lasting contributions were as a generous philanthropist: he made donations in Kashi and Bodhgaya, to hospitals in Darjeeling and Kurseong, and was renowned for never turning away fakirs, *sādhus* or mendicants empty-handed; he was by far the largest individual donor to the fund for the Kurseong Gorkha Library's building, contributing at least Rs. 500 as well as having suggested its construction in the first place.

**Major Sources**

Sinhā (1976), *Chandrikā*.

**Mitrasen (Simjālī Thāpā Magar), Māṣṭar (1895-1946)**

Soldier, singer, songwriter, dramatist, writer.

**Background**

Born 29 December 1895, Dhārā Kholā, near Totārānī (Dharmaśālā Chhāvanī, Kangra); died 9 April 1946, Totārānī.

His grandfather, Sundru Thāpā Magar, originally of Rākhu Kholā, in Nepal's Parbat District, had (according to Thāpā Magar 2000: 45) migrated to Kangra in 1792 during the Gorkha invasion led by Amarsimh Thāpā. His father, Manvīrsen Thāpā Magar was a signalmen in the First Gorkha Rifles and Mitrasen grew up in a military environment; his mother, Rādhā, was of a religious disposition and from an early age he was influenced by *bhajans* and religious songs.

**Education**

Studied up to Class 8.

**Languages**

Nepali, Urdu, Farsi, Hindi, Sanskrit.

**Career**

Mitrasen joined the Indian army (First Gorkha Rifles signal corps) in 1911—against his wishes but in line with family tradition—and saw service in Mesopotamia during the First World War; he opted for voluntary discharge in 1919 and returned home, spending his time singing *bhajans* and starting to write and produce plays; his formal entry into public performance came with the formation, at his instigation, of the Himalayan Theatrical Company in 1926; it staged dozens of plays and through its activities Mitrasen became well known and gained the title 'Master'; from the early 1930s Mitrasen started to travel widely, performing his songs in local villages, Dehradun, Banaras, Darjeeling and Shillong, and later visiting Nepal; between 1933-1945 he had toured widely and also visited parts of central and western Nepal such as Gulmi, Baglung, Palpa and Butwal as well as

Kathmandu (where he met senior literary figures such as Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā and Bālkr̥ṣṇa Sama); it was only when the many gramophone recordings of his plays, *bhajans* and folk songs penetrated Nepal (as well as circulating widely in India) that he gained a wider reputation there; he recorded some two dozen records of folk songs and dramas with companies such as Star Hindustan Records, HMV and Star India (although copies of some of these were lost in a fire in 1979); after his visit to Nepal he adopted the *daurā suruvāl* and *birke topī* as a sign of regard for his ancestral land and its people; when he returned from his trip to Nepal his health started deteriorating; following his long absence while travelling he arrived home in March 1946 and died barely two weeks later. Mitrasen's recordings were played regularly on All India Radio until the 1970s but he was gradually forgotten; the founding of the Mitrasen Saṅgīt Sabhā in Bhāgsu (Dharamsala) in 1982 and its programmes helped to rebuild his public profile and his birth centenary in 1995 was celebrated in Bhāgsu with participation from Nepali literary associations across India and the Royal Nepal Academy; in 1999 his portrait appeared as one of a series of Nepali postage stamps commemorating major writers such as Gopālprasād Rimāl, Bhūpi Śerchan and Rudrarāj Pāṇḍe. The Sikkim Sāhitya Pariṣad established a substantial Mitrasen prize and this was followed by the founding in Nepal of a Master Mitrasen Smṛti Pratiṣṭhān which also instituted a memorial prize.

Married Kalāvātī ca. 1910; she and their three children died in the cholera epidemic of 1923 and in 1924 he married Lājavantī Thāpā; they had one son, Digvijaysen; Lājavantī survived him by 58 years and died in 1998 at the age of 95.

#### **Selected Works**

*Barālko āṃsu*, *Buddha vāṇī* and *Kṛṣṇa janma* were the only works published during Mitrasen's lifetime; the publication of other works, including a collection of essays, a short story and his diary, is planned; he left a large collection of poetry and prose writing in various genres in manuscript, including 97 songs written mainly during his stay in Palpa. His plays recorded on LP include *Dhruva*, *Draupadī Chīrharan*, *Śrī svasthānī vratakathā*, *Satyavādī rājā hariśchandra*, *Kṛṣṇa sudāmā*, *Satyavān sāvitrī*.

#### **Major Sources**

Thāpā Magar (2000), Ḍillīrāj Śarmā (1992/93, 1995/96b, 1996/97c). For details of many other articles, books and research works on Mitrasen see Khagen Śarmā's survey of literature reproduced in Thāpā Magar (2000: 134-36).

### **Mukhiyā (Guruñ), Dhanvīr**

Theatre writer and director, social activist.

#### **Background**

Born Patābuñ Tea Estate, Darjeeling.

His grandfather had been involved in clearing Patābuñ; his father worked as a clerk in the government coal depot near Darjeeling's Victoria Hospital.

#### **Education**

From Rev. Macfarlane's primary school, where he studied Hindi and English, he moved on to the Government High School but the deaths of his mother when he was twelve and father when he was thirteen ended his education.

#### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, English.

**Career**

After the death of his parents, his uncle took him to Gel Tea Estate, where even with his minimal education he became the estate school's 'chhoṭā paṇḍit'; after a brief spell of further study in Kalimpong he ended up as a cowherd for the estate manager for two years; he then trained as a *dhāmī* faith healer but despite earning a widespread reputation for his abilities realised that he needed to educate himself; he took private tuition and, while working in a liquor shop above a press, practised his reading and writing skills; gaining a job as a junior compositor (1909) he rose to senior compositor and then became manager of a private press before joining the government press (1918-1938); his coming across the manuscript of Pahalmān Siṃh Svām̐'s *Aṭalbahādur* in the Gorkha Library sparked a desire to stage Nepali plays; forming the Gorkha National Theatrical Party with the help of Hastalāl Girī and Harisiṃh Thāpā, he put on a production of *Aṭalbahādur* (1908); after two more productions the company was forced to close because of debts and to abandon the house it had taken on rent; the later Children's Amusement Association performed some 25 plays over fifteen years and Mukhiyā was the director and music composer for almost all of them; in 1927, however, he lost all taste for drama when the HCAA, under Laden La, refused him a small loan to pay for the funeral of a relative of his second wife—he never watched a play for the rest of his life. In 1932 he established the Gorkhā Duḥkha Nivārak Sammelan, a social and cultural organisation dedicated to Nepali solidarity regardless of caste or ethnic origin, amidst some opposition; he was also an executive member of the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan (from 1934), the Kurseong Gorkha Library and the Gorkhā Samiti.

**Selected Works**

Mukhiyā wrote many dramas on *paurāṇik* themes, including *Rājā hariśchandra* (1916), *Rukmiṇītharaṇ* (after 1925?) and *Pradumanvijay*, written in the wake of the Rāj Kumārī incident; he also produced a collection of *bhajans* (Rāi claims that no *bhajan* composer in Darjeeling has ever surpassed him) but it seems not to have published.

**Major Sources**

Indra Bahādur Rāi (1984: 1-10).

**Pradhān, Gaṅgāprasād (1851-1932)**

Priest, translator, writer, publisher, mission worker and school inspector.

**Background**

Born 4 July 1851, Ṭhaḥiṭī, Kathmandu as Narasiṃha Nārāyaṇ Pradhān; died 28 March 1932, Darjeeling.

Youngest son of Rūpnārāyaṇ and Rājamatī Pradhān; grandfather Man Pradhān had been a gatekeeper at the Hanumān Ḍhokā royal palace in Kathmandu but his father only followed in his footsteps for a short time (with the rank of *havalḍār*); following the death of his mother, Gaṅgāprasād and family migrated in May 1861 to join his eldest brother Prabhu Nārāyaṇ who had migrated to Darjeeling and gained work as an overseer of coolies in the Ging tea garden.

**Education**

No formal or informal education as a child (when he had to labour as a daily wage coal-porter); joined Rev. Macfarlane's mission school on the Ging estate on 4 July 1870, his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday; was pressurised by family to give up school but after 3 months Macfarlane visited

his home and re-enrolled him; learnt Hindi and English from Macfarlane and his church work.

### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, English.

### **Career**

From August 1871 started teaching in school himself (though records in Edinburgh reportedly list him as a mission school teacher from 1870 to 1874); decided in December 1874 that he wished to convert to Christianity; ran away and was baptised in the American Presbyterian Church in Allahabad on 24 January 1875; 1875-1880 mainly involved in translating the Bible, scripture teaching and church work; over the next two decades carried on mission work, also visited Ranchi for further studies; 1894 appointed to work exclusively on translating the scriptures into Nepali; in 1901 bought the Mission Press, started publication of the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*, and was appointed the first Nepali priest of the East Himalayan Mission; visited Kathmandu in 1913 with a party of Christians but they were expelled from the country; retired from church duties in 1921 but carried on running the Gorkha press until his death; married Elizabeth Rai in 1875, 2 sons and 6 daughters.

### **Selected Works**

(including translations, works attributed, published, and written in collaboration)

*Puruṣharu ra strīharu kā baptismā ko rīt* (1886), *Bāibalko hād* (1904), *Prabhubhoj* (1907/08), *Skūl sodhnuttar* (1908), *Ukhānko postak* (1908), *Said bhannye mānchheko reśamī bunāiko kānko biṣaymāṇi* (1909), *Ālibenomer nāṃu bhayeko mānchheko ṛṅko biṣaymāṇi* (1910), *Hindustānko itihāsko postak* (1910; tr. with Miss Goalen), *Naiṭṅgel arthāt mūṭho gīt gāuṃne charāko biṣay* (1912), *Bāṃsko kathāhā* (1913), *Bāibal - nayā niyam* and *Bāibal - purāṃnu niyam* (both 1914), *Hāṃsko narāmro challāko kathāhā* (1914), *Ek baṭaure sāthī* (1916; tr. with Miss Goalen), *Gohāre Postak* (1918); *Sādhāraṇ sevāko rīt* (1923), *Prabhu yeśu khrīṣṭko susamāchār - markus rachit* (1925); editor and publisher of *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat* 1901-1932.

### **Major Sources**

Salon Kārthak (2001).

## **Pradhān, Hariprasād**

Language activist, judge.

### **Background**

Born into a well-established family which had moved to Darjeeling from Sikkim.

### **Education**

First Nepali to pass MA and BL.

### **Languages**

Nepali, English, Bengali, Hindi.

### **Career**

Active from an early age in promoting the Nepali language; was a member of Darjeeling Government High School's governing board and instrumental in ensuring that the post there occupied by Sūryavikram from 1923 went to a Nepali; chaired the meeting which founded the Nepalī Sāhitya Sammelan in Darjeeling in 1924 and was actively involved

with it until he left Darjeeling in 1930; organised the petition to Calcutta University which replaced 'Pārvatīya' with 'Nepālī' as language name; involved in establishing Darjeeling's Dhīrdhām Śiva temple; was imprisoned along with Sūryavikram and Dharañīdhar for several months in Alipur Jail towards the end of the Second World War; moved to Kathmandu and became the first Chief Justice of Nepal; noted for his forthright support for giving Nepali official status and establishing it as an educational medium.

### ***Selected Works***

*Mero kartavya* (1936), *Brahmasandēś* (1955/56).

### ***Major Sources***

*NLK*, Hariprasād Pradhān (1935), Jñavālī (1998: 1-4).

## **Pradhān, Pārasmaṇi (1898-1986)**

Writer, editor, teacher, school inspector, publisher, educationist.

### ***Background***

Born 1 January 1898, Kalimpong as Praśmān Pradhān ; died 2 February 1986, Siliguri.

Father Bhāgyamaṇi Nevār (Bhīkṣāchārya), of Sūrya Chandra Mahābihār in Patan, left home for Banaras at the age of 14 and was sent to Darjeeling in 1893 by publisher Viśvarāj Śarmā as an itinerant bookseller; settled with wife Lakṣmīmāyā in Kalimpong; moved to nearby village of Sindibong when Pārasmaṇi was four.

### ***Education***

First enrolled in Church of Scotland Mission's Hindi-medium Pudung Primary School, transferred to Waugh Primary School (11<sup>th</sup> Mile, Kalimpong); transferred to night school run by uncle Harkadhvaj Pradhān which then became day school teaching English and Hindi; in March 1913 accompanied his youngest uncle's eldest son (who had passed the middle school examination in Kalimpong and won a scholarship) to Darjeeling as cook and caretaker but also managed to be admitted to class 4 of the Government High School alongside his cousin; passed Matriculation Examination 1918.

### ***Languages***

Nepali, fluent in English and Hindi, knowledge of Sanskrit, learned Bengali from school friends.

### ***Career***

Pārasmaṇi's first essays appeared in *Chandra* and *Gorkhālī* while he was still a school student; even during his schooldays he was a passionate advocate of recognition for the Nepali language and he set up his own Gorkhā Sāhitya Samāj in the Government High School; his first job was as a teacher in Dowhill Primary School 1917 (appointed by governors Dhan Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, Jay Nārāyaṇ Pradhān, Kīrtimān Pradhān); by then he was already involved in Gorkha Library, Kurseong (appointed Honorary Secretary in 1917) and the Himalaya and Children's Amusement Association (HCAA) drama group; he was editor and publisher of *Chandrikā* (1918-1919) and manager of Hari Printing Press from September 1917 to February 1919 when he was appointed first teacher of Nepali to Matriculation level in the Scottish Universities Mission Institute, Kalimpong; appointed Sub-Inspector of Schools, Darjeeling Hill Region February 1921; co-founder of Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, Darjeeling, 1924; between 1918 and 1924 wrote some nine plays for the HCAA; with his brothers established Mani Press in Kalimpong 1928; appointed Fellow

of the Royal Geographical Society of London 1928; appointed Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of London 1929; teacher in Darjeeling Government High School 1931-1935; with his sons established Mani Printing Press in Darjeeling 1947; editor and publisher *Bhāratī* 1949-1958. Pārasmaṇi was heavily involved in controversies over Nepali grammar and orthography and he used his work as the author of a Nepali grammar and of dozens of textbooks to advance his campaign for standardisation; he was similarly involved throughout his life in campaigning for recognition for the Nepali language in India, and played a major role in many of the steps that saw Nepali gradually gain status as a medium for education from primary level to postgraduate and a national literary language; it was Pārasmaṇi who spoke on behalf of the Nepali language when it was being considered for acceptance by the Sahitya Akademi in 1973; when this was successful he became a member of the Akademi's General Council; he subsequently became a member of the governing body of North Bengal University's Nepali Academy and a lifelong patron of Sikkim's Sāhitya Sammelan; he was the recipient of many awards, including honorary doctorates from North Bengal University and Tribhuvan University, the Tribhuvan Puraskār from the Royal Nepal Academy and the Madan Puraskār for his collection of essays *Ṭīpan-ṭāpan*. First married in November 1916 but separated almost immediately; married Kumārī Jasmāyā Pradhān in 1918, twelve children.

#### **Selected Works**

Pradhān (1991: 358-64) and Pradhan (1997: 124-27) list most of Pārasmaṇi's prodigious output: his writings included several plays, dozens of textbooks, grammars, dictionaries, collections of essays and poetry, memoirs, biographies of major Nepali writers and works on other languages, as well as many translated or adapted works. A few major published works include *Sundar kumār* (drama, 1920), *Nepālī vyākaraṇ* (with Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān, 1920, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised and enlarged edition 1928), *Students' Standard Dictionary (English-Nepali)* (1948), *108 amar jīvanī* (3 parts, 1964-65) *Ṭīpan-ṭāpan* (1969), *Rochak saṃsmaraṇ* (1969), *Āphno bāre* (1971), *Kvāṃṭī* (1972), *Kāṭhe jhāṃkrī* (1974), *Kāṭhmāduṃmā daś din* and *Mero kāṭhmāduṃmā yātrā* (1975), *Ramāilo samjhanā kharsānko* (1978).

#### **Major Sources**

Indramani Pradhan (1997), Nagendramaṇi Pradhān (1991).

### **Pradhān, Ratan Nārāyaṇ (1889-1917)**

Teacher, soldier, writer, police officer.

#### **Background**

Born 1 September 1889, Dehra Dun; died 7 December 1917, Kurseong.

Father Havildar Major Puraṇ Siṃh Nepālī had emigrated from Nepal and signed up with the '9<sup>th</sup> Platoon' in Dehra Dun; served with distinction for 22 years and received four bravery medals; mother Viṣṇumāyā Pradhān.

#### **Education**

Passed Entrance Examination in 1908.

#### **Languages**

Nepali, good knowledge of English, presumably Hindi and Bengali through his work.

**Career**

Became the first teacher at Kurseong Middle School (subsequently known as 'Night School', 'M.I. School', and now 'Puṣparānī Uchcha Vidyālaya'), according to 'Nirāśā' until approximately 1912 (but *Statements of Publications* record his attachment to the Garhwalis by the beginning of 1909); among his pupils were Pratimān Siṃh Lāmā (q.v.), litterateur Narabhūp Rāī, sons of the prominent local Agravālā and Goyankā families, and Śrī Rāvat Mahārāj of Kurseong who later joined the Rāmākṣṣṇa Vedānta Āśram; served in 2/39th Garhwalis, Lansdowne; resigned in August 1912 with a reference from his captain ('hard working and has a good knowledge of English ... absolutely trustworthy and has good capabilities') recommending him as Sub-Inspector of Police; he then became Inspector of Police in Kurseong until his death; he is remembered as an imposing and widely respected personality who combined physical prowess with a sharp intellect and left his mark on local society through his work.

**Selected Works**

*Premlaharī* (1909), *Pradhān nīti kusum* (1909), *Pradhān sundarī śikṣā* (1910), *Sukh sāgar* (incomplete manuscript).

**Major Sources**

Ajīt 'Nirāśā' (1976), *Statements of Publications*.

**Rāī, Sardār Bahādur Hanjīt Devān (1879-?)**

Civil servant, police officer, literary patron.

**Background**

Born in Kurseong, above the Dowhill Post Office into an ordinary Darjeeling Nepali family with roots in eastern Nepal.

**Education**

Passed the Minor Examination (equivalent to the later Middle Examination).

**Career**

As soon as he completed his education he was appointed to a government job and in 1907 joined the police as Sub-Inspector; in 1913 he was appointed Legal ('kānunī') Inspector and was subsequently honoured with the rank of Sardār Bahādur; eventually became the Deputy Superintendent of Police of Darjeeling; for some time he took full executive responsibility for the Kurseong Gorkha Library until his other duties made it impossible for him to maintain his commitment; he was a key member of the group who built up the library and raised funds for its own building during difficult financial times in the First World War; he was for many years the President of Darjeeling's Nepālī Sāhitya Sammelan, and it was at his suggestion that his friend Abdur Rahim, CIE, was invited to act as Chairman for one of the Sammelan's annual meetings, the first Muslim to do so; similarly some years later he persuaded F.M. Abdul Ali, a distinguished historian and chief of the Calcutta museum, to attend as Chairman; even after his retirement to Kurseong he kept in touch with developments and events in Darjeeling; he is remembered for his good-naturedness and hard-working support for literary activities even though he was not a talented writer himself.

**Major Sources**

Jñavālī (1998), Śāntirāj Śarmā (1976a: 11-12).

**Sāpkoṭā, Padmanābh (1891/92-1916)**

Writer (generally under the pseudonym Vijiñānvilās).

**Background**

The eldest son of the literary-minded civil servant Subbā Devīprasād Sāpkoṭā (who was one of the founders and editors of *Gorkhālī* and who wrote the preface to Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā's *Naivedya*).

**Education**

Graduated from Darbar High School, Kathmandu; at the age of eighteen passed his Entrance Examination in the first division and earned a government scholarship to study in Calcutta, passing the IA and BA exams.

**Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, Bengali, English.

**Career**

Padmanābh was set for a successful career in the Indian Civil Service, having managed at the age of twenty-five to be appointed as a Sub Deputy Collector but he died just before he was due to take up the post; he is remembered as one of the most talented and innovative writers of his generation, 'a second Motīrām' with immense potential; his writings included translations, short stories, an incomplete novel, essays, biographies and poetry; his *Mahārānī priyaṇvadā*, published in the posthumous collection *Jīvancharitra* was strikingly modern in both subject matter and style (although described as an *upanyās* it was a short story); he also had one original social story with a tragic ending published in *Gorkhālī* (1(7)); his *Ḍā. sūrya prasād* was a detective novel (of which he completed only eight chapters) inspired by the genre which had become so popular in Hindi; it managed, however, to incorporate a lively and colourful depiction of contemporary Nepali society, both in various locations within Kathmandu and of places such as Bhīmpheḍī and Bīrgaṅj; Padmanābh was, according to Pārasmaṇi Pradhān, the translator from Bengali of Rameśchandra Datta's 'Baṅga vijetā' which was serialised in *Chandra* in 1914; his history of India was probably a translation or reworking of Datta's original.

**Selected Works**

*Bhāratvarṣko itihās* (1914), *Ḍā. sūrya prasād* (composed in ca. 1914-15), *Jīvancharitra* (1916)

**Major Sources**

Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 219-22).

**Śarmā (Adhikārī), Sadāśiva (1874/75-1946/47)**

Writer.

**Background**

Born Naksāl, Kathmandu.

**Education**

Educated in Nepali and Sanskrit (possibly in Banaras).

**Languages**

Nepali, Sanskrit, Hindi.

**Career**

He married the daughter of writer and publisher Harihar Śarmā (q.v.), Gaṅgādevī, and this connection may have inspired him towards literary creativity; he settled in Banaras and became a prolific writer and a pioneer of the novel genre in Nepal; he published his early stories in the Banaras Nepali journal *Upanyās Taraṅginī* (1902) and his *Sundarībhūṣaṇ* appeared in instalments in *Sundarī*; his *Mahendraprabhā* (1902/03) is recognised as the first published Nepali novel and his translation of the popular Hindi novel *Chandrakāntā* gained a wide public audience; he was closely associated with the production and popularisation of the influential narrative *Vīrsikkā* (some writers have speculated that he was responsible for its first appearance in Nepali but this seems unlikely), and his version of the tale of *Madhumālatī*, published in Banaras by Viśvarāj Harihar, was also one of the popular romances that circulated most widely through the Nepali-speaking world, in print and in recitation. While Tārānāth Śarmā castigates his novels for being unrealistic and lacking national character, Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī finds his style in both original work and translations ‘readable and enjoyable’.

**Selected Works**

*Chandrakāntā pratham bhāg* (1899/1900), *Narendra mohinī* (translation, 1901/02), *Bīrbal kautuhal bhāg 1-2* (1902), *Mahābhārat mauśalparva* (verse translation, 1907/08), *Mahendraprabhā* (1902/03), *Madhumālatī kathā* (1917), *Karmavipāk saṃhitā* (1925/26).

**Major Sources**

Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 120-21), Mohanrāj Śarmā (1983/84: 17), *NLK*, Tārānāth Śarmā (1994/95: 72-73).

**Śarmā (Nepāl), Tārānāth (1887/88-1975/76)**

Writer, bookseller.

**Background**

Born in Arnāhā village, Rautahaṭ District, Nepal Tarai.

Son of Naranāth Nepāl.

**Education**

Received some education in Banaras.

**Languages**

Nepali, Sanskrit, Hindi.

**Career**

A frequent contributor to *Chandrikā* and other journals, he is remembered best as a poet but was also an accomplished writer of prose and, on his return from studies in Sanskrit, opened a bookshop in Birganj, almost certainly the first; his first prose narrative, *Sulochanāvṛttānta*, was published in *Mādhavī*; many of his historical and biographical sketches published in *Chandrikā* were collected in the 50-page *Bhāratīya devīharūko charitra*, printed by the Rashmi Press in Kurseong; he provided Sūryavikram with the old hand-written manuscript that he then edited into the form of *Rām sāh* (1933); his *Rāghav-vilāp* was published by the Nepālī Sāhitya Sammellan

**Selected Works**

*Bhāratīya devīharūko charitra* (1919/20), *Rāghav-vilāp* (1933?), *Urmilā*, *Śrī kṛṣṇa līlā*, *Śrī śivastuti*, *Mahākālī Gaṅgājīko stuti* (1946/47), *Nepālśatak* (1951/52).

**Major Sources**

Bhaṭṭarāi (1988/89: 304-13), Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1993/94: 228-29), Jñavāli (1998: 5), *NLK*.

**Śarmā (Lāmichhāne), Viśvarāj and Harihar**

Publishers and writers.

**Background**

Viśvarāj may have been born in ca. 1862 (in Kathmandu) and Harihar ca. 1863/64 (in Banaras) but this cannot be confirmed.

The cousins Viśvarāj and Harihar were born into a family with a long tradition of learning. Their fathers Viṣṇuhari and Jīvanāth were both well educated by their erudite grandfather, Śrīkrṣṇa; while Viṣṇuhari's subject of study is not known, they both studied in India and Jīvanāth, father of Viśvarāj, became well known as a legal expert or *naiyāyik*. After their education Viṣṇuhari settled in Banaras while Jīvanāth moved to Kathmandu. Viśvarāj's elder brother Dānrāj was apparently learned (Bhojrāj Bhaṭṭarāi refers to him at the end of his *Ānanada rāmāyaṇa* as 'gurū'), and he established and managed for some time the Chandra Prabhā Litho Press in Kathmandu's Nāg Pokharī (this press was established ca. 1896, and books that it printed from then until ca. 1906 have been preserved); Dānrāj may have been the manager of Naksāl's Bhagavatī Press but evidence is not conclusive; he published one work, a Nepali-themed *Bārahmāsā* (1904/05). Harihar's elder brother Śrīdhara had studied in Navodvīp, Bengal, and was known as Śrīdhara Śāstrī. Apart from their own famous publishing partnership, Viśvarāj and Harihar collaborated with Dānrāj and Viśvarāj's younger brother Devrāj on various projects as well as working separately.

**Education**

Harihar was educated in Banaras, although it is not known to what level.

**Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, Sanskrit.

**Career**

The first appearance of any of the cousins in print (as far as surviving records indicate) was with the publication in 1884/85 of *Pārvaṇ śrāddhavidhi*, edited by Harihar, published by Devrāj and printed at Banaras's Brajachandra Yantrālaya; this was followed in 1885/86 by *Svasthanī vratakathā* and in 1887/88 by their *Śloka pañchāśikā*, published from Allahabad's Prayāg Press; however later catalogues indicate that they had already established their Gorkhā Pustakālaya bookshop at Banaras's Rāmghaṭ in 1881; there is evidence that they started their own publishing business from at least 1884/85, the oldest such business among Nepalis in Banaras; their business was initially founded on general consumer good supply and on the sale of Sanskrit texts and vernacular commentaries of useful works for practising priests; from 1885/86, however, they demonstrated a commitment to publishing original Nepali works when they produced Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Svasthanī vratakathā*; from this time onwards Harihar, Devrāj and Damaruvallabh Pokharel devoted much time to the preservation and restoration of old Nepali manuscripts and books—in this, as well as their publication of Bhānubhakta's entire *Rāmāyaṇa* their contribution was probably more significant than that of the much better remembered Motīrām Bhaṭṭa: Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi concludes that Motīrām did little more than follow in their footsteps and bring further enthusiasm to the sort of projects they were already engaged in: even Motīrām's Motīkrṣṇa Company, opened in Kathmandu in

1888/89, had been preceded by the Lāmichhānes' Śāradā Prakāś Pustakālaya of Indrachok, founded in 1887/88 and which published a handful of books; similarly, while Motīrām set up the Paśupat Press in Kathmandu in 1893/94 to promote independent Nepali publishing, Ḍamaruvallabh had already opened the Gorkhā Yantrālaya in Banaras five years previously. The Lāmichhānes made use of this press for their publications before they set up their own Durgā Press in 1893/94. While there was some friendly competition between Motīrām's circle and the Lāmichhānes' (whom Motīrām characterised as 'chyāṅṭā chyāṅṭā' poets) they appreciated each other's efforts and Viśvarāj Harihar published works by Motīrām intimates such as Gopīnāth Lohanī. The Gorkhā Pustakālaya was successful enough to expand to Calcutta in 1907, and to employ Divākār Śarmā as a manager from ca. 1922 (it is not known if he was in any way related to the Lāmichhāne Śarmās). Harihar was the most inclined to writing and literature: he donated to the Banaras Nepali Library (cynics might contend that his contribution of one copy of each of his publications must have been a useful exercise in public relations but he maintained an interest in the library, attending its fourth anniversary meeting); other evidence—such as Rāmprasād Satyāl's dedication of his *Samśārko ānanda* (1921) to the 'charitable, generous, multilingual Paṇḍit Harihar'—remains of his literary leanings; he was prominent among early producers of prose narratives and versatile in the range of topics which he wrote on or translated, from *karmakāṇḍa*, astrological and other religious works to moral and emotional stories.

#### **Selected Works**

Harihar: *Premśāgar* (1888/89), *Chaṇḍī śaptaśatī* (1889/90), *Vīrsikkā* (1<sup>st</sup> part 1889/90), *Bhāṣā pañcharatna* (2<sup>nd</sup> part 1889/90), *Śukabahattarī* (1893/94), *Śivasvaroday* (1893/94), *Āḍitya hṛday bhāṣā ṭīkā* (1893/94), *Satyanārāyaṇ kathā* (1893/94), *Gītagovinda bhāṣā* (1894/95), *Pāṇḍavgītā* (1898/99), *Rāmgītā* (1898/99), *Nakṣatra mālā* (1909/10), *Buddha chāṅakya nītidarpaṇ* (1913/14).

Viśvarāj: although he was named as the author in many later editions of works Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi states that it is unclear how many or which he actually wrote, although there is evidence of Harihar's respect for him as a learned person as well as his elder.

#### **Major Sources**

Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1993/94: 177-80, 267; 1999/2000a: 185-202), *Chandra* (1(7): 19-20), *Chandrikā* (2(3): 87)

### **Satyāl, Rāmprasād (ca. 1878-1963/64)**

Professional writer.

#### **Background**

Born in Kathmandu; died in Banaras.

His father Lokramaṇ Satyāl, a Sanskrit scholar, was the *purohit* of Dev Śamśer Rāṇā; when the latter was expelled from Nepal Lokramaṇ chose voluntary exile and thus Banaras became the Satyāls' home.

#### **Education**

Educated in Banaras; no information as to where or to what level.

#### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi, Sanskrit, probably English.

### Career

His earliest work appeared in *Sundarī* in the form of two stories, *Kalāvati* and *Madhuvālā*, which although short and incomplete (they appeared to be preliminary sketches that Satyāl planned to develop into novels) demonstrate an independence of subject matter and style; however his narrative skills were not encouraged by the publishing system and its laws of supply and demand; although he was a prolific writer, his three Hindi novels produced in a single year (*Ananta*, *Kiraṅśaṣī*, *Premlatā*, 1909/10), were not equalled by his more copious output in Nepali which avoided social issues and did not develop the genre; he did, however, play an important part in increasing the popularity of narratives and novels among the general readership and in his level of production was second only to Śambhuprasād Dhuṅyāl (q.v.); with Śambhuprasād he was one of the first professional Nepali writers, a salaried employee of Mādhavprasād Regmī's publishing house as well as a freelance contributor to rivals such as the Prābhākari Company, Viśvarāj Harihar, Puṅyaprasād Upādhyāya, Īśvarīprasād Śarmā's General Trading Company and Hariśaṅkarlāl—works he produced for these competitors (such as *Lālhīrāko kathā*, *Madhumālatīko kathā* and *Gulsanovar*) appeared in the name of the publishers themselves rather than Satyāl; apart from the stories mentioned above, his two other original works were detective novels, *Karṇelko hatyā* and *Videśī badmās*; his other prose narratives were derived from Hindi or Farsi-Urdu sources and his *Samśārko ānanda* was a verse description of countries of the world; he also wrote *jhyāure* and *laharī* verse as well as dramas.

### Selected Works

*Ānanda laharī*, *Upadeś kusum*, *Hāttimatāīko kathā*, *Mahābhārata aṭhārai parva*, *19 Vīrpatnī* (1908/09), *Paisā paisā* (1909/10), *Samśārko ānanda* (1921), *Kokaśāstra* (1921?), *Bhāgya-vichār* (1923), *Gorakhā thara gotrako savāī* (1923), *Vanamālā* (1923/34), *Bhārat darpaṇ*, (1924), *Akbar-bīrbal vilās* (ca. 1925), *Mahālakṣmī saṅvād* (1925), *Vichitra dīpak* (1925/26), *Phūlmā bhamarā* (drama, 1928/29), *Satī sāvitṛī* (drama, 1928/29), *Mahāsatī anusūyā* (1928/29), *Pativratā manasādevī* (1928/29), *Syamantakmaṇīko kathā* (1928/29), *Śaivyā hariśchandra* (drama, 1929), *Sunkesarārānīko kathā* (1932), *Sūryapurāṇako savāī* (1935) *Śivarātrīko kathā* (1939), *Bhojakālidās* (1948/49), *Siddha mantrāvalī* (1951), *Nayāṃ premlaharī* (1955/56), *Vidhavā vṛttānta* (1960/61), *Karṇelko hatyā* (1961/62), *Videśī badmās* (1961/62), *Daśakumāracharitra* (1962/63).

### Major Sources

Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāī (1993/94: 198-202), *NLK*.

### Sedhāim (Śarmā/Josī), Vaijanāth (ca. 1890-1953)

Civil servant, writer, editor, publisher/bookseller.

#### Background

Probably born in 1890/91 in Bāgmatī Gaurīghaṭ Dhāmkīṭār, died in 1953 (Chaitra 2009 V.S. according to family sources) in Kathmandu.

Family originally residents of Dānmai (Sedhāimthok), Nuvākoṭ; of Lohanī ancestry, forebears including the accomplished poet Baḍānanda Lohanī (featured in Bāburām Āchārya's *Purānā kavi ra kavītā*); paternal grandfather was Viṣṇuśaṅkar (a palace *pūjākoṭhe* priest), father Jagannāth (1867/68-1928/29) was also a good poet, whose work the young Vaijanāth assisted with; Vaijanāth's son Rāmśaṅkar 'Saroj' continued the family's poetic tradition.

**Education**

Spent many years in Bombay where he matriculated; he had already completed an intermediate education in Sanskrit.

**Languages**

Nepali, Sanskrit, Hindi; probably Marathi.

**Career**

Not known when he joined government service but was *Gorkhāpatra* manager by ca. 1915; remained attached to the *Gorkhāpatra* for a long time in various capacities including editor; government records also list him as a writer in the Dilli Bazaar press in 1923/24; he ended with the rank of Khardār; his and his eldest son's government service interrupted by occasional dismissal and reappointment. Literary activities inspired by his Bombay experiences and education and especially by his association with Harihar Āchārya Dīkṣit (q.v.); while in Bombay and working as a cook he produced and had published the first part of his *Upadeś sahasrī* and also wrote the (now lost) *Bambaīmā pāṃch mahinā*; early *samasyāpūrti* compositions appeared in *Sundarī*; he was also an accomplished prose writer; it is impossible to tell how much he may have written while living in Dilli Bazaar but his novel *Chakraparikram* indicates that he was talented and original—it depicts the local social environment, including drinking, gambling and adultery, in ways that other writers of this period shied away from—although Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi concludes that its poor structure and lack of character development undermine its claims to be considered on a par with modern novels; inspired by the Bombay-based Gorkhā Grantha Prachārak Maṅḍalī he established (1914) the Gorkha Agency in Kathmandu which published and sold books and other consumer goods; Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi lists eighteen Gorkha Agency books which have been lost, of which Seḍhāim may have been the author; he published more than a dozen books, made many signed and unsigned prose and verse contributions to the *Gorkhāpatra*, including the important translation of *Kathāsaritsāgar*, 1932-34.

**Selected Works**

*Bhūchandra chandrikā ra chandramayūkh* (1913/14), *Paśupati līlā* (Hindi, 1913/14), *Vivāh-śatak* (with Kṛṣṇachandra Śarmā Āryāl (q.v.), 1916/17 (?)), *Chakraparikram* (1916/17-1926/27), *Gorkhā bhāṣā* (with Kṛṣṇachandra Śarmā Āryāl (q.v.), 1917), *Upadeś sahasrī* (1917/18), *Śrī 3 chandrabhakti puṣpāñjali* (1925/26), *Upadeś maṇimālā* (1935/36), *Vichāraśatak* (1935/36), *Upadeś sahasrī* (1939/40), *Kālā pralāpmālā* (1952/53).

**Major Sources**

Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1993/94: 217-19; 1999/200a: 141-46), Bhaṭṭarāi (1988/89: 338-45), Tārānāth Śarmā (1994/95: 60-61).

**Suvedī, Śikharnāth (1864/65-1948/49)**

Poet, writer, publisher.

**Background**

Born Machchhegaum, Lalitpur District, Nepal; died Banaras.

Son of Tārānāth Suvedī.

**Education**

Sanskritic education; knowledge of English, etc. probably dates to after his arrival in Banaras.

**Languages**

Nepali, Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Marathi.

**Career**

Śikharnāth spent his young adulthood in Kathmandu, apparently waiting for some opportunity for employment and not engaged in writing; for unknown reasons he came to Banaras in 1900/01 and remained there for the rest of his life; he was an unparalleled self-publicist and never failed to advertise his talents with superlatives and in the most glowing terms; he was also convinced that he was the best Nepali poet (at least of his contemporaries and probably of all time) and went to some lengths to denigrate the works of others; proud of his and his family's religious purity he was scathing of attempts by non-Brāhmaṇs to write and urged people to ignore any works by non-Brāhmaṇs, be they members of lower castes, other ethnic groups or atheists; he also ran a bookshop, the Nepālī Pustakālaya, and was active in publishing and promoting his own work, as well as himself. As to his literary abilities, Barāl is scathing in his assessment of Śikharnāth's talent, claiming that all his work was derivative, unimaginative and unexceptional; he concludes that Śikharnāth's overriding objective was commercial success and this necessarily distracted his attention from aesthetic questions; other critics have, however, been more generous and noted his versatility and talent for parody and deft satire in verse even though none of his prose works was original; his reworkings of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* themes (such as his *Karṇaparva* and *Rāmāśvamedha*) were commercially successful; he became best known for his informative works (such as the *Śikharnāth bhāṣya* with which he made his name), in which he presented all kinds of information from the religious to the practical in verse form; his works on pilgrimage places and *karmakāṇḍa* materials were in a similar vein, while his *Tharagotravarāvali* was also aimed, like many individual encomiums he had composed, to please the authorities in Nepal; with his *Akṣarmālā* he entered the textbook business and made a genuine effort to produce an accessible and enjoyable primer; this reflected his general character, which was playful and mischievous as well as self-regarding; he did not get along well with the young students of the Rasik Samāj who published *Sundarī*: they lampooned him as 'sāmḍhe' ('ox'). Married four times as each of his earlier wives died.

**Selected Works**

*Vīr ṣaṣṭikā* (1898/99), *Śikharnāth bhāṣya* (1902/03), *Pināsko kathā* (pre-1904/05), *Svasthānī vratakathā* (1904/05), *Akṣarmālā* (1913), *Tharagotravarāvali* (1915), *Śṛṅgāradarpaṇ* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1917)

**Major Sources**

Barāl (1998b), Śarmā Bhaṭṭarāi (1993/94: 223), Bhaṭṭarāi (1988/89: 34-42)

**Thākur Chandan Siṃh (1887-1968)**

Soldier, editor, publisher, civil servant, social activist and political leader.

**Background**

Born 21 February 1887, Dehradun; died 18 October 1968, Chittaranjan Hospital, Calcutta.

Born into a high status Ṭhākur Śāh lineage, his father Ṭhākur Jīt Siṃh Śāhī, a surveyor in the Survey of India, died while surveying the Pathan borderlands leaving Chandan Siṃh to be brought up by his mother, Pārvatī.

### **Education**

Matriculated in 1903 in the first division from DAV High School, Dehradun; completed Intermediate studies from Muir Central College, Allahabad, in 1906.

### **Languages**

Nepali, English, Hindi.

### **Career**

After completing his studies he was appointed Registrar of the High Court of Bikaner Estate (1907); joined the Camel Corps of Bikaner's Ganga Regiment in August 1914, rising to the rank of Captain and seeing service across the Middle East and Europe as well as being awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal twice; served the Bikaner Maharaja as Private Secretary (1919-20); joined the Indian National Congress as a volunteer in 1920; founded the National School in Dandipur, Dehradun (1920, later to become Gorkha Sainik High School and College) and taught there; this school introduced Nepali medium teaching up to Entrance (*praveśikā*) examination level; elected as President of Dehradun Branch of the Hindu Mahasabha and set up All India Ex-Gorkha Soldiers' Association (1921); left Congress in 1922 and in 1924 founded the All-India Gorkha League with headquarters in Dehradun; acquired the Grand Himalayan Press from the Maharaja of Nabha (1926) and used it to publish *Gorkhā Saṃsār* (1926-1929) and the *Himalayan Times*; sold the press in 1928 but continued publishing *Taruṅ Gorkhā* (1928-1933) and the *Himalayan Review*; was instrumental in turning the Rāj Kumārī incident into a major *cause célèbre* through his newspapers and the organising of a large public meeting in March 1927 in the Albert Hall, Calcutta; the AIGL started to decay in 1934 and in 1935 Chandan Siṃh joined the state of Gwalior as an administrator, rising to Secretary of the Foreign and Political Affairs Department as well as serving as District Magistrate, Collector and Assistant Inspector General of Police; resigned from position to arrange the marriage of his niece and served 1942-45 in the Indian Army; 1945-50 acted as guardian to the trust of the late Maharaj Kumar Hari Singh of Jodhpur; in 1950 returned to Dehradun and became an active supporter of the Nepali Congress and the democracy movement in Nepal; 1954-55 published *Svatantra Nepālī* weekly; 1956-68 personal advisor to the Rajmata of Gwalior. Married Kumārī Jamunādevī (1908), two sons; she died in 1918 and in 1920 he married Kumārī Nidrādivyeśvarī Devī, daughter of Nepal's former Chief of Staff Khaḍga Śamsēr Jaṅg Bahādur Rāṅā (a brother of Chandra Śamsēr), two sons and two daughters.

### **Major Sources**

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### **Upādhyāya, Padmaprasād (and Puṅyaprasād)**

Publishers, businessmen.

### **Background**

No information available.

### **Languages**

Nepali, Hindi.

**Career**

Padmaprasād was a colourful character and a dedicated entrepreneur; he had some dozen acknowledged wives and was known in Banaras as 'jvāisāheb' (son-in-law or brother-in-law); as well as maintaining his publishing business (book distribution was combined with medicine sales through his Mahākālī Auśadhālaya), he also ran a gambling den and a brothel; he had all sorts of money-making schemes and a determination to enrich himself but little literary inclination; his son, who later became involved with the publishing work, did develop some writing skills but the real author of works in his name was probably Śambhuprasād Dhuṅgyāl (q.v.), who had become involved with the business through force of economic circumstance; the *Śuksāgar* and edition of Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyaṇa* that appeared in Padmaprasād's name were beyond his capabilities and must have been the work of Śambhuprasād, who arrived in Banaras in 1920/21 looking for work just as Padmaprasād was searching for someone able both to run the publishing business and write books on demand; given the intense competition among publishers employing someone as talented as Śambhuprasād was a coup for Puṅyaprasād's publishing house and helped it to develop a wider list; Śambhuprasād's relationship with the company dated to before his arrival in Banaras (Puṅyaprasād had brought out his Akbar and Birbal Stories from at least 1916); on their indirect contribution to literary Nepali Bhaṭṭarāī comments 'by giving shelter to the destitute Dhuṅgyāl and encouraging him to bring out the skill and capability within him in the Nepali language, Padmaprasād and Puṅyaprasād's contribution in this context must be considered as memorable.' Padmaprasād's publishing business came to an abrupt and dramatic end in 1927 with his involvement in the Rāj Kumārī murder case, when he was accused of procuring Nepali girls for immoral purposes; he had apparently sold Rāj Kumārī for Rs. 1300 as a concubine to the Marwari businessman Hīrālāl, who was subsequently killed by Khaḍga Bahādur Biṣṭa.

**Selected Works**

Works in Padmaprasād and Puṅyaprasād's names (and others such as Bharat Prasād) were almost certainly written by Śambhuprasād Dhuṅgyāl.

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Kathmandu: various editors.

Vols. 2-4.

*Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*, 1901-30, monthly

Darjeeling: editor and publisher Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān.

28(9)

*Upanyās Taraṅginī*, 1902

Banaras: editor and publisher Ḍhuṅḍirāj Ṛṣikeś Upādhyāya.

Not available.

*Sundarī*, 1906-08, monthly

Banaras: editor and publisher Devīdatta Parājulī, vol. 2 (from at least issue 4) edited and published by Harihar Śarmā.<sup>362</sup>

1(1-12), 2(1, 4, 5, 7, 8).

*Mādhavī*, 1908-09, monthly

Banaras: editor and publisher Rāmmani Āchārya Dīkṣit [under the pseudonym Mātrprasād Śarmā Adhikārī].

1(1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-8).

*Chandra*, September 1914—August 1915, monthly

Banaras: publisher Mādho Prasād, no named editor.

1(1-10, 12).

*Gorkhālī*, 1915—17, weekly

Banaras: editor and publisher Sūryavikram Jñavālī [although editorial work was generally shared between Devīprasād Sāpkotā, Kṛṣṇaprasād Koirālā and Śivaprasād Regmī].

1(1, 3, 4, 10, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 25, 31, 35, 37, 40, 43, 45, 47, 49), 2(3, 9, 12).

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<sup>362</sup> Chhetri (1993: 36) records that *Sundarī*'s editors were Devīdatta Parājulī, Somanāth Sigdyāl and in later issues Chakrapāni Chālise (on their life and other works see Bhaṭṭarāi (1988/89: 138-44, 281-303).

*Chandrikā*, January 1918—September 1919, monthly  
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1(1-12), 2(1-8).

*Janmabhūmi*, January—April 1922  
Banaras: editor and publisher Sūryavikram Jñāvālī.  
Not available.

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Not available.

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1(1-3, 7-8)

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1(1),3(1),4(1).

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Shillong: editor and publisher Maṇisiṃh Guruṅ.  
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