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NEPALI SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS INTERNAL DYNAMICS

Samar Sinha

From the 1990's onwards, an interesting dynamics within the Nepali speech community¹ is taking place both in Nepal and in India regarding ethnicity² within which the issue of language is embedded. The present paper attempts to explore how the languages of the various nationalities³ in the different socio-political realities play a role in asserting identity, democratic values and norms, functions for the aspiration and the agenda of these dynamics. The language politics, policies, and practices vis-à-vis the role of the Nepali language in the contemporary Nepali speech community are examined in terms of contact, conflict and cleavages among the nationalities in these countries.

Different realities of the same nationalities

To understand the genesis, development and implications of the dynamics, it is essential to have a cursory look at the contemporary Nepali speech community and its contemporary local subtleties. In both the countries, realities are different and in flux; hence, the aspirations and the agenda hidden behind these dynamics in these countries are different. Yet they share a lot more commonalities than the differences due to the common origin and history despite residing in adjacent countries as their respective populace.

Nepali speech community: who, what, and when

Nepali is a generic category, which subsumes the nationalities of a large number of speakers of the Tibeto-Burman, Indo-Aryan and other language families, who have distinct religious, cultural and linguistic traits.

In defining the members of the Nepali speech community with respect to the conceptual categories,⁴ there pop up certain difficulties, as they cannot be straight jacketed within the understood parlance (Whelpton 1997). These categories are transient, fluid, and overlapping, and often a single category is not adequate to refer to the same in India and Nepal.

Speakers undergoes through various labels in the formation and the evolution of the Nepali community. For instance, the present-day Tamang was *jati*/national known by their toponym as Murmi before becoming a nationality on account of what is popularly known as the 'Gorkha conquest'. With the codification of caste in 1854, Tamang became *jat*/caste, and recently as: *janjati* or ethnic, later *adibasi janjati*/indigenous nationality in Nepal. On the Indian side, Tamang continued to be identified as *jat* among the general caste prior to being recognised as Other Backward Classes (OBC)⁵, and

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subsequently as a Scheduled Tribe (*anushuchit janjati*). In the ongoing process of political articulation, in defining their identity, these changing conceptual categories are catalytic in both the countries with language at its forefront.

Due to the conflicting and fuzzy boundaries in history, terms and concepts, glossonym, ethnonym, toponym, shifting reference, religious practices, and in aspirations on ethnic and regional lines, nationality, and citizenship, this paper resorts to 'ception'⁶. In other words, it means how the constituent members conceive themselves and how the other members perceive them. Within the umbrella of Nepali, the basic ceptual levels are Rai, Limbu, and others (as *Kiranti*⁷); Tamang, Gurung, Magar, and others (as *Mongol*), and Chettri-Bahun and others (as *Khas-Arya*). Further, into septs (*thar*) for example in Rai we have Khaling, Chamling, Sampang, Bantawa, Kulung, etc.

In the Nepali speech community, language is often used as a symbolic badge of membership and distinctiveness. Many of the constituent members conceive themselves to the language they speak (Miyaoaka, 2001). At a close look, there seems to be a close relationship between ception and linguistic identity. Turin (2004) captures this relation in the context of Nepal, which is more or less applicable to the Indian context too with an addition of the language spoken in the past but not mother tongue⁸ at this time interval is often associated with the ception.

- i. Single-to-many: Rai at the basic level is a single constituent member. Each sept speaks a range of at least 15 mutually unintelligible languages from each other such as Bantawa, Puma, Chamling, Chulung, Thulung, Kulung, Sampang, Dumi and Athphare. Hence, a Nepali proverb says, '*Jati Rai, uti kura,*' i.e. "as many Rais as there are Rais speeches"
- ii. One-to-one: Magar, Tamang, Gurung, Limbu, Sherpa, Rajbhanshi, Kumal, Majhi, Danuwar, Chepang, Thami, Thakali, Bhote, Dhimal, Lepcha, Byansi, Raute and Raji each has a language of their own irrespective of their septs.
- iii. Many-to-single: Newar; Chettri, Bahun, Kami, Damai, etc. share a single language.
- iv. All-to-one: Nepali by all the member of the Nepali speech community.

Nepali: Apparatus for national consolidation and consolidation of nations

After the historical 'Gorkha conquest' of the Newar kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley by the Shah rulers of Gorkha in 1769 and the successive conquest of the adjacent kingdoms and *kipats*⁹ of the different nations, the ongoing process of political consolidation and nation building brought about significant changes in the then existing social structure. The Gorkha rulers adopted Hinduism as the state religion, incorporating Hindu religious

ideology, values and norms in the statecraft and the society. Later, Janga Bahadur Rana in 1854, aimed at religious homogenization codified non-Hindu section of the populace into the Hindu caste fold. In the resultant caste hierarchy, Bahun, Chettri, Thakuri and Sanyasi, commonly lumped together as Chettri-Bahun (BC) formed the top most dominant caste in the society. The other nations were collectively called as *matwali* (alcohol drinkers). The tradesmen, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Gaine and others, commonly known today as dalit were the lowest and the most discriminated by the others (Bista (1991) for the Nepali model(s) of caste hierarchy.

Nepali in *kipat* to Kingdom

The codification made a significant impact not only on the social, economic, political, educational, legal system but also in the linguistic situation. Prior to the 'Gorkha conquest', Khas language was a link language and was the language adopted by the Shah rulers (Pradhan 1984:5; Bista 1991 153). The resultant caste hierarchy, further, gave an impetus to linguistic hierarchy by the state patronization of Khas language, one of the earliest and the prominent appellations given to modern Nepali and the language native to the BC dominant group and the *dalit*. Consequently, the state patronage propelled Nepali language as a linguistic means to achieve political consolidation and nation building.

Nepali as a political apparatus initiated the process of linguistic assimilation marginalizing the speakers of other languages in every sphere of life. The power structure, further, reinforced the Nepali language into the society. Nepali language as a mode for upward social mobility implanted the language firmly into the psyche of the other language speakers, and as a lingua franca, its use in media and administration and the development of rich literature, the language gained its prominence over the babel of languages of the Kingdom.

Until 1990, under the partyless Panchayati system, the state actively discouraged social and cultural aspirations and mobilizations based on the ethnic lines in Nepal. The Panchayati system sought to promote modernization by advocating homogenization with a slogan of '*ek bhasa, ek bhash, ek desh*' (one language, one custom, one country).¹⁰ Dahal & Dahal (1986:248) observes that "Nepali has indeed established itself as the inter ethnic and national language of everyday communication and is increasingly seen as a passport to participation in development and national policy, even at the village level, both in the Tarai and in the Hills".

Nepali beyond Nepal

At different intervals in history, migration to the Darjeeling Hills, Sikkim, Doars, Bhutan, and the northeast India and beyond took place which dates back to the 16th century (Dahal & Dahal 1998:1). The 'Gorkha conquest' and

the resultant exile/emigration of the present day nationalities, and thereafter, the territorial expansion of Nepal till Killa Kangra in the west to the river Teesta in the east (Dahal & Dahal 1998:1) and till the northern banks of the Ganges in the south with its capital at present day Kathmandu¹¹, and the subsequent treaty of 1816, the opening of the tea gardens in the Darjeeling Hills, the British and the Indian army recruiting depots, the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950, the porous Indo-Nepal border and several other pull and push factors made way for different nations in search of stable economic activity, freedom from the tyranny of the Rana rulers, and the social discrimination¹² up to Darjeeling and Sikkim Hills, the Doars, Bhutan, and the northeast India and beyond at different intervals in history.

The historical process of migration, diasporic situation, the forces of ecology, 'democracy', occupation, modernization, secular values in education; and the existential conditions- the socio-economic pressure, the question of identity and its baggage, collective and shared history, and the state machinery, gave a thrust in the formation of a consciousness called Nepali. This consciousness with its epicentre at Darjeeling, swelled with its vibrant expressions in the field of art, literature, music, theatre, politics, and in common every day life, accepting different cultural practices, taboos and kinship terms. On the Indian soil, the different nations became a nationality called Nepali, distinct from that of Nepal (Subba 1985, 2002; Gurung 1998, 2001; Hutt 1997). In fact, Nepali as an ethnicity converged outside Nepal in the Hills of Darjeeling and Sikkim rather than through homogenisation as aimed through structural imposition by the rulers in Nepal. Soon, the Nepalis¹³ pioneered in defining ethnicity, history, literature and inclusive politics (see Gurung 2003).

On the linguistic front, Nepali language, which gave an impetus to the birth of Nepali consciousness evolved as the marker of the linguistic identity and the binding force between the members of the Nepali speech community. Since the 17th century, Nepali language was used in the administration and the legal system of the kingdom of Sikkim, of which Darjeeling and Doars were a part (BNRP 1992). With the passage of time, among the autochthones Lepcha and the earlier migrant communities *Khampa* from eastern Tibet (now called as *Bhutia* and *Dzenjongpa* in Darjeeling and Sikkim, respectively) and *Drukpa* from Bhutan¹⁴, the Nepali language evolved not only as a lingua franca¹⁵ but also emerged as a medium of education and of literary expression. Importantly, the Nepali language became a mode of socio-economic progress. The functional importance and the scheduled status of Nepali in the social fabric is a self-evaluator. On the other hand, other languages of the Nepali speech community lost its pace and space in the linguistic ecological condition of the Darjeeling and Sikkim Hills.

Convergence, a distinctive process of language contact which is simultaneously a linguistic, historical and social movement (Annamalai

1998), has shaped up the present day Nepali language, a distinct regional variety of Nepali developed in the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim, which later came to be known as 'Darjeelinge Nepali' (Gyewali 1954/1962; Dahal & Dahal 1998; Gopal 2001; Riccardi 2003) like a cultural convergence in shaping up the present day Nepali speech community in India.

The *Darjeelinge* variety, yet to be accounted as a regional variety within the linguistic work, in addition to the Tibeto-Burman substratum of the Nepali language, has the Tibeto-Burman adstratum (Dahal & Dahal 1998). Though this variety is easily and well understood among the speakers of Nepali, it awakens distinct linguistic ception as one can easily identify the country of the speaker of the variety on account of its grammar.

Nepali Speech Community: Post Democracy and Post Mandal

The restoration of the multiparty constitutional monarchy in Nepal in 1990 ensured civil liberty and political rights. Even after the framing of the Constitution in 1990, the supremacy of one language (Nepali), one script (*Devanagari*), one religion (Hindu), one community (BC) and one value system (Hindu) over other persisted Article 4.1 states, "Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu, constitutional monarchial kingdom." Article 6.1 of the 1990 Constitution declares the Nepali language (in the *Devanagari* script) as *raashtra bhaasa* (language of the nation/official language) and all other languages as *raashtriya bhaasa* (national languages). In addition to it, according to Article 9.4 (a) only those foreigners who know the Nepali language written in the *Devanagari* script can acquire Nepali citizenship. The same opportunity is not provided to anyone knowing other languages and/or script of Nepal. Article 18.2 permits to operate schools in languages other than Nepali up to the primary level only, and not beyond that.

Apart from these privileged treatment of Nepali under the aegis of the 1990 Constitution, numerous other small but significant state mechanisms function evidently to create hegemony of Nepali over other languages.

- i. Along with Nepali, Sanskrit is imposed and promoted on the whole society. Sanskrit is compulsory in the school curriculum (Lawoti 2000:7) though Sanskrit is not mother tongue of any Nepali citizens.
- ii. The state educational grants and subsidies are provided for promotion of Nepali and Sanskrit, and the lack of state support for the educational institutions operating in other languages of Nepal (ibid: 18-20).
- iii. The Radio Nepal broadcasts news and 15-minute weekly program in eighteen ethnic languages. 99.10 % airtime is in Nepali (Yatru 2001:309).

The 1990 constitution provides space to air grievances and mobilizes to fight for rights. Assertion and demands of rights openly, freely and in organized

ways by various section of the population is only a decade long phenomenon (Lawoti 2000:2). The constitutional inadequacies along with the other state mechanisms failed to meet the aspirations of the various nationalities both at the cultural level and at the level of accessing resources (ibid: 9). It has become a major source of irritant in protecting the rights of the nationalities¹⁶. The issue of linguistic rights, therefore, is embedded to the minority rights, later to the indigenous peoples' right in response to the United Nations' call for a Decade of Indigenous People (Pradhan 2002: 16).

After the Mandalisation of the Indian society and the consequent developments, the Nepali consciousness weakened and consequently, internal cracks began to develop within its members. Each member started to assert its identity to benefit from the policy. With these aspirations, associations groomed into the ethno-political organisations in order to press the demand rifting the Nepali society leading to the pillarisation inflecting serious concerns for the pluralistic, egalitarian and progressive society.

The contemporary realities reflected it in many ways. The internal cracks in Darjeeling can evidently be seen in the discriminatory OBC list of West Bengal, where a particular sept is included while the other septs of the same caste are excluded creating a self-inflicting cleavage in the state where the community is regionally dominant. On the other hand, in Assam and Uttaranchal, the selected members are identified as the Gorkha in their respective state OBC lists, irrespective of any caste/sept or other prejudices. In Sikkim, recently all the members irrespective of caste and sept are included in the state OBC list (previously, few castes/septs were included as OBCs) blurring the divide between Newar, Bahun and Chettri (NBC)¹⁷ vs. OBC among the Nepalis. However, these state identities do not translate as the same in the central OBC list where many are excluded and are recognised as general caste (with an assumption that they are not backward in the centre), nor they are uniform among the Indian states.

With the passage of time, it was realised that the OBCification does not cater well and does not serve the purpose permanently, the race for the Scheduled Tribe status leaving aside the OBC claim began with its own marketing strategies. The Nepaliness after the birth of Nepali as an ethnicity, and the backwardness associated with the OBC claim was replaced by 'learn how to be tribal' (Shneiderman & Turin 2006). The process of learning as well as marketing 'tribal' entailed invoking the cultural capital of distinctiveness for which rituals and practices, language and script were sought to prove 'tribal' in the contemporary Indian political context. The ritual hunt (not in the generally understood parlance) by the scouting parties in the ancestral places in Nepal, observing long lost, discarded cultural practices with the assistance of the kindred from Nepal working in the Hills, publication of lexicon and grammatical sketches, discovery and development of scripts, and other discoveries and inventions are part of the check list to

assert 'tribal'. On the other hand, these organisations have asserted for endogamy, membership through paternal ancestry only, and other 'do's' and 'do's not' to pursue emblematic distinctiveness.

In India, the quest of asserting different identity led to a genesis of a serious linguistic concern. The different politically active members started to disclaim the Nepali language as the marker of their identity and invoked language to distinguish from each other as the marker of their identity assertion. Consequently, along the linguistic lines, the community has begun to be divided, which further accelerated the division between the septs whose languages were sept-based. All these happened without establishing neither the actual use and functionality of those languages nor with the concern for linguistic ecology and diversity, but solely on the basis of asserting linguistic heritage.

Linguistic justification

In Nepal, the issue of language is embedded to the indigenous peoples' rights. The national languages are maintained and are the mother tongue of 49.7% of the Nepali population. Multilingual publications like *Sayapatri* (Yadava 1999:207), minority newspapers and journals (Lawoti 2000:44; Onta et. al. 2001: 553) are in circulation to press the demand. Under the umbrella of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), previously known as the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN) (*Nepal Janjati Mahasangh*), the language issue has gained a momentum in the form of a linguistic movement. Unlike in India, they are not against Nepali language but want to ensure constitutional justice for all languages of Nepal. In view with the recommendations of the National Language Recommendations Commission 1991, recommendations of the conference 'Linguistic Problems in Nepal and Ways to Solve it - 1991' organized by the then NEFEN, the 1st National Mother Tongue Conference March 2000 issued '*Bhasik Adhikarsambandhi Raashtriya Ghoshna Patra - 2000*' (Tamang 2000: 16-22).

In Nepal, thus, the language movement is to ensure justice, preserve and promote linguistic heritage, values, and culture, to ensure a federal structure, to promote national unity and integration, to establish egalitarian society and cordial relationship between different nationalities, to end the linguistic hierarchy and the hegemony of Nepali language, and moreover, to ensure democratic values and norms. Finally, it is aimed towards linguistic ecology (Mühlhäusler 2002).

In India, the rise of language issue embraced by the ethno-political organisations after the Mandalisation can be seen as a failure of the Nepali consciousness at large to achieve the desired affirmative measures, apart from inclusion of the Nepali language in the VIII schedule¹⁸, for upward mobility of the migrant community, whose history and culture denies their identity on the Indian soil largely due to others, misperception about their

citizenship. On the other hand, lack of 'national figure', being migrant and minority, in a diasporic situation, and several such factors make the community psychologically insecure, and laid back on retrospective memory. Consequently, the linguistic issue is raised in support of availing affirmative measures to make their hold strong in India. Moreover, behind the linguistic concern there is no linguistic motivation for linguistic diversity but primarily there is linguistic motivation used as a tool to create distinct identity vis-à-vis Nepali to avail reservation. This concern has added not only to the fragmentation of Nepali consciousness further but also with respect to the Nepali language.

Linguistic reality

Though a reliable linguistic survey of Nepal is yet to be accomplished, the 2001 census of Nepal has identified 92 languages as mother tongue barring some unknown languages (Yadava 2003). The National Language Policy Recommendations Commission includes 61 languages whose speakers constitute a minimum threshold of one percent of the total population of the country. The NEFIN quotes 125 languages, of which 90 are ethnic group languages and 35 are sept-based languages (Tamang 2000:1) There exist a few languages with a sizable number of native speakers and long literary/oral tradition which but has a restricted use in communication or is even 'folklorised' (Fishman 1972). However, a large number of the minority languages are either endangered or moribund or dead (Krauss' term 1985)¹⁹.

In India, no matter how strongly they claim and campaign for the spread and revitalization/revival of languages for asserting mother tongue to maintain a separate identity; it is a fact that none other than Nepali is their mother tongue. It is proved beyond doubt that Nepali, ironically, as a medium was chosen to assert their separate linguistic identity. Unlike in Nepal, where Nepali is spoken by the 50.3% of the total population as their mother tongue (Yadava 1999:198), in the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim it is spoken by the 100% of the population (BNRP 1992) with mother tongue speakers over 90% of the population.

The initial failure on the linguistic front forced them to roll back the logic and consequently adopt a new strategy— since languages of these nationalities have enriched Nepali, it is essential to enrich these languages in order to further enrich Nepali and not to marginalize its other speakers (Gurung 2002). This, undoubtedly, refers to the convergence of Nepali with other languages (Pokharel 1996; Gopal 2001). Due to the lack of functional aspect and practice, such move died its own death. Later on, the corpus planning- absorption of lexical items from other languages of the Nepali community was set in motion, which is undoubtedly, a welcome step, a recuperative measure for regenerating Nepali consciousness. However, such a plan and planning is yet to see light.

On the other hand, materials published about and/or in language and script of the different claimants to the various measures are circulated widely among its members in pursuit to be culturally 'tribal', and the purchase has been identified with 'in tune' with the organisation and the aspiration. It does not bother, least matter, that how many of them actually speak, read, or write in language other than Nepali, in *Devanagari*, (and English). The linguistic issue to create condition to revitalise linguistic diversity and ecology is beside the point 'to be tribal'. However, it seems (and is expected under such agenda) that with the accomplishment of the aspiration, the language issue fades away like in the case of Tamang and Limbu without creating optimal, suitable ecological condition particular to each language for its survival. The absolute dependency on the state machinery rather than through the community-based strategies with respect to language issue is a concern to attend if not for linguistic diversity, the knowledge embedded to it or for the continuation of the policy but at least to utilise the benefits of the packages availed.

Borders without barriers

The assertion of separate ethnic identity started in Nepal as the need of the hour and precipitated in India in the wake of Mandalisation. Nepal and India have different social, cultural and political realities. Within this background, therefore, we need to explore the matter further. In view of the ception within the Nepali speech community as mentioned in the section 1.2, the developments in Nepal and India show a constant tug-of-war between nationalism vs. nationalism (Fishman 1972) in different socio-political environment, which translates into a case of a dichotomy of revival vs. maintenance.

In Nepal, revival, rather empowerment of the national languages is to ensure justice, preserve and promote linguistic heritage and culture, to maintain cordial relationship between different nationalities and to establish egalitarian society in response to and to counter 'the culture of fatalism'²⁰ professed in Nepal. In the prevailing political scenario in Nepal, it is imperative to establish a federal democratic republic to meet people's aspirations.

On the other hand, in the Indian democracy, the pursuit of reassertion with the national languages as a tool for distinctiveness is leading towards the weakening, fragmentation, and consequently, towards the pillarisation of the Nepali community from the pluralistic, egalitarian, progressive, 'open incipient' community. Even though ception in the Nepali speech community has linguistic basis, the ethno-political organisations are asserting the linguistic difference to highlight the ceptual identity to avail the policy. The perceived problem in the Nepali speech community lies not in the assertion nor in the linguistic concern to enrich linguistic diversity within the

community but in fragmenting away from the Nepali ethnicity because of discarding and distancing from the Nepali identity and language, which is a worrisome factor for the rest of all the Nepalis in India.

At the end of the day, it is a fact though one may not be willing and may be hard for some to accept that Nepali identity and language cannot be kicked off from one's stack of identity cards. The post-Mandal aspirations prove that distinctiveness of belonging to the particular cept was maintained within the Nepali speech community in India despite the emergence of Nepali as an ethnicity. It has also come into light that those who disclaimed Nepali in the wake of aspiration have reclaimed the membership as a tribe within the Nepali community. This further establishes the importance of Nepali identity in the Indian soil. Similar applies with respect to language. A collective, democratic approach, making Nepali language as an instrument to meet the community's aspirations is the urgent need of the hour rather than just acknowledging its scheduled status. This, however, does not mean to establish linguistic hegemony of Nepali over other languages of the community. At the same time, efforts should not be spared to create linguistic and enrich cultural diversity in the Nepali speech community. The state recognition of the 11 languages in Sikkim is not solely to make the state greener linguistically too²¹, but primarily to consolidate various members of the Nepali community without politically articulating distinctiveness among the members.

The aspirations towards better socio-economic development, a search for distinct identity and prosperity are the issues of all the Nepalis. The ethno-political organisations are the social reality of the Darjeeling and Sikkim Hills. But such organisations need to come out of its narrow shell to free air to perform the role of civil society. The formation of apex committees for the welfare of Nepali speech community (Gorkha Apex Committee (GAC) and Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC)) to voice their concern is another welcome step in politicizing and in rejuvenating consciousness among the members of the Nepali speech community in India as a mosaic rather than a single, unitary, subsuming overarching of the earlier time.

The complexity of the relationship in the evolving political, social and cultural context of the last century, the Nepalis of India, who are forced to live in a kind of cultural shadow with a negotiated identity carrying an extra baggage of identity, without full recognition of their rights and identity in the land of their birth 22 nd, the subsequent quest for the separate identity of the Nepalis in the Indian soil has led to various nomenclatures of the speech community as well as of language vis-à-vis Nepal. Such existential condition is invigorating enough to give an impetus to form a functional, democratic, multinationality apex committee at the national level to research, write, sketch policies, advocate, and lobby to educate the Indian masses that the

diverse citizenry of India includes Nepalis as well and to meet the community's aspirations in the Indian soil (Cf. Subba 2002).

Further, one can envision a 'Saami model'²³ between various nationalities of Nepal and India. At another plane, among the large mass of Nepali speakers in India, there is a movement underway to distance themselves from their 'country of origin' and instead search for an identity within India and the region where they have established themselves (ibid: 120). On the other hand, there is a similar undercurrent in Nepal towards Nepalis of India²⁴. Such undercurrents are certainly a hindrance in chasing the dream of borders without barriers.

Conclusion

As survival precedes revival but not the vice-versa, hence, within the specific socio-economic, political, and demographic and various other contexts revival or maintenance seems to be beneficial to the speakers for whom it is meant. The extreme revivalism as well as the extreme linguistic homogenization is both non-progressives for the speakers, when it is followed without determining the contemporary context, without understanding of praxis and establishing functioning linguistic diversity first. Hence, it seems that revival and maintenance are context specific. Therefore, the need of the revival or maintenance needs to be addressed not in the flow of the notion but by determining the contemporary context and the proceeds for whom, if revival or maintenance is meant rather than as an academic interest only to which scholarly analysts are accountable.

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Notes

- 1 A group of speakers (not necessarily of the same language) who share a set of norms and rule for the use of language(s) (Gumperz 1968) (See Suzanne Romaine (1980) for further details)
- 2 Royce, Anya Peterson (1982:18) defines ethnic identity as „the sum total of feelings on the part of group members about those values, symbols,

- and common histories that identify them as a distinct group', 'Ethnicity' is simply ethnic based action.
- 3 The term 'nationality' is used here to mean politically articulate and organized nation which do not have their own state, rather than 'ethnic community or group' as used by various writers.
 - 4 One of the most sensitive exercises in multicultural study and discourse is the use of language and terms to describe communities (Rajendra Pradhan, anthropologist. *Himal* (English), 7 (1).
 - 5 Inclusion into the OBC is caste/sept based rather than on the economic class. The riteria cannot be challenged as per the Supreme Court order.
 - 6 Leonard Talmy's (1996) term from cognitive linguistics for conception and perception.
 - 7 This level is of self-identification rather than racial, and cannot be mapped exactly into the later.
 - 8 I would like to call this return as 'frozen mother tongue', which is historically based rather than actually used by the returnee.
 - 9 Communally owned land.
 - 10 The slogan is based on Balkrishna Sama's formulation: '*hamro raja, hamro bhasa, hamro bhesh, hamro desh*' (Our King, our language, our custom, our country).
 - 11 Bhattacharjee (1996).
 - 12 Dutt (1981); Sinha (1982, 1990); Subba (1998).
 - 13 Nepali is citizenship in Nepal rather than ethnicity.
 - 14 Kalimpong and Doars were once a part of Bhutan.
 - 15 Bhotia, Lepcha and Drukpa are scheduled tribes. They have their own languages, which are endangered in various degrees.
 - 16 The Janjati (ethnic/indigenous), the Dalit, and the Madhesi (*tarai*) (Gurung 2003).
 - 17 The division is not really based on the Mandal list.
 - 18 It is often mentioned in literature on Nepali/Gorkha that Gorkha is included in the VIII Schedule. As a matter of fact, Gorkha is not included in the VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is Nepali alone. It is through the Government of India Gazette notice dated 20th August 1992 that Nepali also known as Gorkha in some areas (Darjeeling Gorkha (Autonomous) Hill Council) may continue to use it as its official language. It would be constitutionally/legally wrong to say that Gorkha is included in the Scheduled language and is synonymous to Nepali in its official status. In this paper, I am putting aside the Nepali/Gorkha issue as it deserves an independent attention.
 - 19 See Abbi (2004), Yadava (1999; 2003).
 - 20 Bista (1991: 2) writes, "The current nature of Nepali society is such that the groups with positive elements of value systems in their social and collective practices are increasingly excluded from the mainstream of

society and their values are endangered as another, essentially alien, culture becomes pervasive. This other culture, the culture of fatalism, includes values and institutions that are inherently in conflict with development. In Nepal, the culture of fatalism devalues the concept of productivity. The productive sector of the society is increasingly getting discouraged in the proportion that the fatalistic culture is being encouraged and propagated, while its proponents are gaining ascendancy."

- 21 Sikkim is the environmentally greenest state of India.
- 22 There are continuous reports about how Nepali speakers are harassed and humiliated in some parts of India, and how they are evicted from home and hearth, as has happened in the Northeast (Subba: 2002).
- 23 Prof. Roy Burman proposed the same model for the Naga people.
- 24 Nepalis of India are often derogatorily referred as 'Prawasi Nepali' (non-resident Nepali) or 'Muglanay', ('of the Mughal empire') or even worst as 'chhayatare' (76- as a district of Nepal or due to vehicle's number plate).

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