LANGUAGE POLITICS IN NEPAL

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Introduction

The worldwide process of democratization, the recent global thrust on human rights, peace and participatory democracy, the politics of foreign aid, the growing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and several other factors have affected politics of language in Nepal. Politics in general term is the study of interactions, actions and reactions among individuals, between individuals and groups, and between groups and larger community what we call nation-state. As language is a voluntary vocal system of communication between individuals and individuals and between individuals and groups and socio-cultural phenomena, politics, being a part of the entire social system, does not remain unaffected by linguistic environment. Language and politics are closely related to one another and the former is one of the determining factors of the latter. Language is a powerful tool by which politicians transmit political conception, and symbols of political power, ideologies and values. It is equally important medium of interest articulation, aggregation and communication, from society to polity and polity to society thereby affecting decision making process. During the election, political leaders who express their views clearly in the public gatherings can garner more votes and popular support than those who cannot. Political leaders can manipulate ideas through language and can attract the voters towards their political ideologies and beliefs. As language is a powerful means of political communication, the choice of words by political leaders largely reflects their attitudes, style, capacity, vision and performance. Language is also related with leadership pattern which is a quality that signifies the ability of a person or a group of people to persuade and force others to act or not to act by inspiring them and making them believe and not to believe that a proposed course of action is

the best or correct one. (Robertson, 1993:275–276). Language, as Michael West (1926) sees, is "the most powerful component of group individuality." (Fishman 1983:129) Language is the most powerful factor in bringing the elite and the masses together for strengthening social and national integration. It makes a scientific and technical knowledge easily accessible to the people in their own languages and, thus, helps in the process of democratization, acculturation and socialization as well as for the creation of new political and scientific outlook (Khuller, 1995:112–124). The political interpretation of language is, in most sense has been considered, "a contest over words, a language game" (Mclean, 1996:274).

Language Politics: Concept and Context

In to-day's globalized world, language politics has become an universal phenomenon and has become a quite fashionable terms which denotes the relationship between the languages and politics and the influence of the former to the latter. In order to understand the entire political process and structure, it is essential to study which language citizens utilize for their overall development. The recognition of a particular language in a civil and political society is an important aspect of the legitimatization of a particular culture, values, norms, belief, history and a lot of socio-economic and political factors. In a case where language is politically relevant, minorities of an ethnic or linguistic group is suppressed by the majority groups. The minorities generally perceive the dominant language group as alien. In the Third World countries, which were being colonialized by Western powers, to speak the language of the rulers is a practical difficulty and essentially a symbol of political domination and unfreedom. As language defines opportunities and social mobility, speech communities have become important centres for the focusing of revolutionary or at least protest politics in the most modern societies. Linguistic cleavages, like class and religion, have become the most important source of *"identity politics"* and the polities that underlies in modern political movements in most of the countries, particularly Belgium, Romania, Spain, the UK, and the former Yugoslavia. Language politics has become more pronounced in the Third World countries because it has become an important factor in national integration and national unity. But national unity and integration sometimes could be achieved by the common use of a foreign language, particularly the language of the former imperialist powers in some colonialized countries. (Robertson, 1993:273-274) Due to the multiplicity of the speech communities in India, Indian Constitution makers included Hindi as the national and English as the auxiliary language at least for fifteen years and

intended to standardize Hindi all over India. But India failed to do that and both English and Hindi are equally used as language of official business. In most of the modern societies, language politics is sometimes deeply "resented by residents of the relevant language area who have accepted political assimilation with speakers of the dominant tongue, which is supposed to the standard language and the *lingua franca* in most parts of the state, and who regard adherence to the indigenous language as atavistic or even merely nostalgic". Language politics is an important area of study because human thoughts, views, and conflicts are reflected and restricted by language. It would be more rational to define "political culture around language than most other cleavage patterns and this may account for the virulence of language-group politics" (Robertson 1993:274).

The purity of language, as Schelesinger (1995:442) asserts, is under unrelenting attack from every side including professors, politicians, and newspapermen. "Politics in basic aspect is a symbolic and therefore a linguistic phenomenon. Social fluidity, moral pretension political and literary demagoguery, corporate and academic, bureaucratization and a false conception of democracy are leading us into semantic chaos." Every political movement generates its own language fields. Language field legitimizes one set of motives, values and ideals and banishes the rest. Language reflects the existing socio-economic and political environment and conditions of a particular nation-state. Special correlation between politics and debasement of language has been clearly pointed out by the linguists. Modern Political writings and language are supposed to be bad. "In our times", as George Orwell (1985:42-436) argues "it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his/her private opinions and not a "party line". The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestos, white papers and the speeches of undersecretaries do, of course, vary from party to party but they are all alike in that one almost never finds than a fresh, vivid, home-made turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases." "The desire for success at the polls has sentimentalized and cheapened the language of politics," thus worsening the quality of language. "The corruption of individuals is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power and of praise.... words are perverted to stand for things which are not" (Schlesinger, 1985:437-450) Political factors are responsible for the rise and fall of languages. It is believed that the overall corruption in the governmental machinery may lead to corruption in the field of language also. "The German, Russian and Italian

languages, have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years as a result of dictatorship. But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation and among people who should and do not know better" (Orwell, 1985:420-436).

The choice of language by a state or nation in these days becomes an important but most controversial political issue which is most often tied to elements of nationalism. Languages in most of nation states are allocated either officially or unofficially in terms of the functions they serve in the state or nation where they are used in a particular content or situation (Eastman: 1983: 5). In order to study the politics of language in a nation state it would be essential to study some of the important linguistic concepts, such as speech communities, nationalism, nation, people, varieties of languages, etc. that affect the politics of a nation. Modern linguistics advocate that language is closely interrelated with society and social factors, such as class, caste, sex, social context, geography and so on (Trudgil 1976). Language always interacts with nationality, ethnic groups and several other social factors. Socio-linguistics, often known as "Sociology of language" as its alternative name, in particular, tries to explore ad comprehend the study of the structure and use of language in its social and cultural contexts: explores its socio cultural values, studies all aspects of the relationship between language and society and "matters as the linguistic identity of social groups, social attitudes of language, standard non standard forms of language, the patterns and needs of national language use, social varieties levels of language, the social basis of multi-lingualism and so on." (Crystal 1985: 81-282). In short, its studies all aspects of the relationship between language and society (Rai 1995). Language has sometimes been held to be the altogether essential axis of nationality conflicts, it is worth stressing that linguism is not an inevitable outcome of linguistic diversity. As indeed kinship, race and other factors, language differences need not in themselves to be particularly divisive. Region, religion, custom and other factors are closely associated with it (Geertz, 1994:29-34).

Language functions or situations can be classified into ten categories that exist in multilingual settings. These ten types of language situations or options of language choice, classified by type of language, was first set forth in 1951 in an UNESCO Report on the use of vernacular languages in education. As outline in the report, (1) Indigenous language is the language of the original inhabitants of an area; (2) *Lingua Franca* is a language which is a means of common communication among the various linguistics groups; (3) Mother Tongue is the language one acquires as a child; (4) National

language is a language of a political, social and cultural entity; (5) Pidgin is a language formed by mixing various languages used regularly by people of various linguistic backgrounds; (6) Official language is a language used in governmental transactions; (7) Regional language is a common language of the people living in a particular area having various linguistic backgrounds; (8) Second language is a language acquired besides first language; (9) Vernacular language is the first language of a linguistic group which is socially or politically dominated by a group having different language; and (10) World language is a global language used for wider communication (UNESCO 1951: 689-690; Eastman 1983: 5–6).

Scholars like Orwell have beautifully presented a vision of a society in which the state exercises effective control over people, through deliberate manipulation of language, by introducing a turgidily jargonistic form of language. Most politicians invariably try to manipulate people through their use of language and engage in double speak" linguists have even used satirical words on political propaganda and speechifying" (Mc lean, 1996: 274-275). "Language is a hugely important dimension of politics. The political dimension of language raises complex and, ultimately, mysterious questions. Questions of culture, identity and manipulative power are inseparable from linguistic structures." It is, however, essential to be alert in the simplification or generalization about language and politics and always remain aware that language in most sense is not separate from political reality but part of that reality existing in most modern societies (Mclean, 1996: 274-275).

Linguistic and Socio-cultural Milieu of Nepal

In order to understand the language politics, it would be pertinent to make a bird's eye view of the linguistic and socio-cultural milieu in Nepal. Nepal is one of the small, landlocked and the poorest countries of the world having limited economic capability. It is a multi lingual, multi racial, multi ethnic, and multi cultural pluralistic society. It is a multi religious society where the majority Hindus (86.51%) are followed by Buddhists (7.78%), Islam (3.53%), Kiranti (1.72%), Christian (0.17%), Jain (0.04%) and other (0.14%) (CBS, 1996:18). Cultural heterogeneity and linguistic plurality are closely related in Nepalese society (Bista 1967 and 1991). While studying the language politics in Nepal, the important dimension of socio-linguistic reality should not be underestimated. The socio-cultural gap, that is prevailing in distribution of power among the small number of urbanized politically and economically dominant groups, is well pronounced, particularly Brahmins, Chhetris and Newars (Dahal and Subba 1986:240). The linguistic and ethnic groups of Nepal as outlined in government statistics are as follows:

Total Population by Mother Tongue for Nepal 1991

S.N.	Mother Tongue	Total Population
01.	Nepali	93,02,880
02.	Maithili	21,91,900
03.	Bhojpuri	13,79,717
04.	Newari	6,90,007
05.	Gurung	2,2,918
06.	Tamang	9,04,456
07.	Abadhi	3,74,638
08.	Tharu	9,93,388
09.	Magar	4,30,264
10.	Limbu	2,54,088
11.	Rai/Kirati	4,39,312
12.	Sherpa	1,21,819
13.	Thakali	7,113
14.	Rajbansi	85,558
15.	Sataar	25,302
16.	Danuwar	23,721
17.	Santhal	8,030
18.	Hindi	1,70,997
19.	Urdu	2,02,208
20.	Chepang	25,097
21.	Thami	14,400
22.	Gengali	27,712
23.	Majhi	11,322
24.	Dhimal	15,014
25.	Jhangar	15,175
26.	Marwadi	16,514
27.	Kumhale	1,413
28.	Darai	6,520
29.	Jirel	4,229
30.	Byanshi	1,314
31.	Raji	2,959
32.	English	2,784
33.	Other Local Languages	4,95,862
34.	Other Foreign Languages	8,309
35.	Not Stated	9,157
	Total Population	17,82,107

Source: HMG Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) 1996, 19-20.

Population by Caste/Ethnic Group for Nepal 1991

S.N.	Caste/Ethnic Groups	Total Population
01.	Yadav/Ahir	7,65,127
02.	Kayastha	53,545
03.	Kumhar	72,008
04.	Bania	1,01,868
05.	Dhobi	76,594
06.	Sudhi/Kalwar	1,62,046
07.	Kurmi	1,66,718
08.	Brahman (Tarai)	1,62,886
09.	Rajput	55,712
10.	Tharu	11,94,224
11.	Teli	2,50,732
12.	Kushwha	2,05,797
13.	Muslim	6,53,055
14.	Haluwai	44,417
15.	Mallah	1,10,413
16.	Rajbanshi	82,177
17.	Dhimal	16,781
18.	Gangain	22,526
19.	Marwadi	29,173
20.	Bengali	7,909
21.	Dahnuk	1,36,944
22.	Shikh	9,292
23.	Dhusadh	93,242
24.	Chamar	2,03,919
25.	Khatway	66,612
26.	Musahar	1,41,980
27.	Kewat	1,01,482
28.	Rajbhar	33,433
29.	Ranu	70,634
30.	Others (Tarai)	6,27,514
31.	Brahman (Hill)	23,88,455
32.	Chhetri	2968,082
33.	Thakuri	2,99,473
34.	Sanyasi	181,726
35.	Newar	10,41,090

36.	Limbu	2,97,186
37.	Rai	5,25,551
38.	Gurung	4,49,189
39.	Thakali	13,731
40.	Tamang	10,18,252
41.	Magar	13,39,308
42.	Danuwar	50,754
43.	Jirel	4,889
44.	Majhi	55,050
45.	Sunuwar	40,943
46.	Gaine	4,484
47.	Chepang	36,656
48.	Kumal	76,635
49.	Churoute	1,778
50.	Bote	6,718
51.	Lepcha	4,826
52.	Raute	2,878
53.	Darai	10,759
54.	Raji	3,274
55.	Thami	19,103
56.	Damai	3,67,989
57.	Kami	9,63,655
58.	Sarki	2,76,224
59.	Wadi	7,082
60.	Others (Hill)	1,84,216
61.	Sherpa	1,10,358
62.	Bhote	12,463
63.	Others (Mountain)	1,741
64.	NoCaste (Foreigners)	2,951
65.	Not Stated	4,858
	Total	2,886,385

Source: CBS, 1996

Linguistic Profile of Nepal: Regarding the number of languages spoken in Nepal, there is no uniformity among the official and unofficial statistics. The individual and non-governmental researches reveal that there are more than 70 languages whereas the official statistics put the number different in different periods: 36 in 1952-54 population census, 17 in 1971, 18 in 1981 and 19 in 1991. The contestability of the government statistics/data and the lack of reliable linguistic survey have further created confusions providing scope to

those interested in language politics. The languages spoken in Nepal (except Kusunda) are said to belong to four major language families:, Austro-Asiatic, Dravadians, Tibeto-Burman, and Indo-Aryan (Yadav 1996: 233-239). There are altogether half a dozen writing system/scripts in contemporary languages of Nepal out of which Devanagari is the most commonly used script. Nepali and few other languages are written in this script. The genetic affiliation of Kusunda is yet to be identified (Yadav, 1996: 233-239). The various mother tongues spoken in Nepal can be classified as 14 Indo-Aryan, 20 Tibeto-Burman and one each of the Munda and Dravidan families. The proportion of the population speaking Indo-Aryan language has increased from 77.5% in 1952/54 to 80% in 1991, while the figure for Tibeto-Burman speakers has declined from 21.9% to 17% during the same period. The number of Nepali speakers more than doubled from 4 million to 9.3 million during 1952/54-1991 (Gurung 1997:495-532).

Attempts have been made to classify the Nepalese into "the communities that largely use languages or dialects of Sino-Tibetan family who belong to or are believed in general to have originated from the Mongolian racial stock; the dominant ruling castes of Brahmans and Kshtriyas of Indo-Aryan origin, who live largely is the hills and speak Nepali as their vernacular; as lastly, the people who live in the plains of the South and had either migrated from India in the last two centuries to the Tarai or were living there as autochthons (of Austric-Dravidian Origin) and speak dialects of the Southern region" (Aditya, 1991:2). Nepali language, as the *lingua franca* developed in Nepal for the last five hundred years, serves as a link language among different communities including people from Kumaon Garwal of present day India in the West to Assam and Bhutan in the East. The language has, thus, been meeting the contemporary communication and development requirements of these societies (D.R. Dahal, 1998:4).

Nepali language has its unique and distinctive characteristics. Language is attuned to the expression of status and power. The use of various words for the various classes to indicate the same meaning is one of its features. The stratification of Nepali pronouns into *Ta, Timi, Tapain, Yanha/Aafu, (oneself) Hajur* and *Mausuf* for the functional use for the English equivalent *you* has greater impact in the socio-political process of Nepal (Adhikari, 1993: 66-67). Politically speaking, the Nepali pronouns *Ta,* generally used for people in the low status for the powerless people and *Timi* is used for the people for both equal and lower status. The pronoun, *Tapain* is used for the respectable superiors and *Yanha/Aafu* is the most honorific pronoun used for

the people. *Hajur* is synonymous to mostly power elites and *Mausuf*, or *Mausuf-Sarkar*, is used for His Majesty the King, the Queen, the crown prince and the members of the royal family. These five honorofic pronouns in Nepali, thus, might be interpreted politically as one showing no respect *(Ta)*, one showing some degree of respect *(Timi)*, one showing high degree of respect *(Tapain)*, one showing special respect *(Yahan/Aafu)*, and the last two *(Hajur and Mausuf)* showing the highest level of respect. This linguistic stratification has led to the class distinction and political and social inequality in Nepalese society.

The dialects of Nepali are classified on the basis of the geographic region where the people speak that languages. The *Para Paschima*, (Far Western), *Magha Paschima* (Mid Western), *Wore Paschima* (Near Western), *Majhali* (Central), and *Purvelli* (Eastern) are its principal dialects and sub-dialects. Out the these, the Eastern dialect is broadly spoken and, thus, extends from Dailekha, Jajarkot and Salyan districts of Nepal upto Bhutan, Aasam and Burma in the East. (Pokharel, 2048 VS:45-72 and Sijapati: 2041 VS) As local languages in Nepal are often divided by dialect, it, as Gellner (1997:20) views, "often happens that two members of the same ethnic group prefer to speak Nepali to each other either to increase comprehensibility or to avoid the status implications of specific dialects." The acceptance of Nepali language by the Nepalese people is based on a number of considerations, such as common cultural background, as an accessory to sustain livelihood, for state patronage, and or regional comprehensives. (Gautam 1991:129-131) The potential of Nepali language to integrate the society, thus, seems enormous but its actual capacity to homogenize different cultures is doubted (Dahal, 1998:4). The national language for a nation-state is selected on various grounds and it has several unique characteristics. It is an effective medium of interactions among different linguistic groups, and is flexible. It tries to maintain political neutrality; ensures social justice; and is rich in functional specialization. It works as the official and working language, medium of instruction, link language, and so on.

On the basis of the linguistic surveys so for conducted, the languages spoken in Nepal belong to various (linguistic) families. Languages, as Gurung (1998:59-93) opines, vary widely in their retention. Bengali and Rajbanshi report more speakers than the population of their social groups. Satar, as some linguists point out, is the only language that belongs to Asiatic family group. It is spoken by the Satars of Jhapa district in East Nepal. Satar and Santhal, as some linguistic groups point out, are the same

languages spoken by the Satar and Santhal linguistic communities but the Census Report of 1991 considers these languages as different ones. Nearly 25,392 people are the speakers of Satar and 8030 as the speakers of Santhal, Except the collection of few words by the Royal Nepal Academy (RNA), no important work has been done in these languages. Besides Satar, Dhimal, Meche, Raji and all the languages within Rai-Kiranti group belong to Asiatic family (Pokharel: 2022, 2021, 2043, Gautam: 2049, 95-196). Several languages like Tamil, Telegu, Konnad, Malayalam and Brahuc in India belong to Dravidian group but Jhangar is the only language that belongs to this group in Nepal. As Jhangar is spoken in the central Tarai, it is highly influenced by two other important languages of this region–Bhojpuri and Maithili. The total number of speakers of this language, according to the 1991 Population Census, is 15,975 (CBS, 1996:20).

Several important languages spoken in Nepal's Southern plains like Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Danuwar, Majhi, Awadhi, Rajbanshi, Darai, Kumal and Bote and three more languages-Hindi, Urdu and Marwari, as mentioned in the 1991 Census Report, belong to Indo-Aryan group. Maithili, the second largest language after Nepali, is mostly spoken in the Mithila region, particularly in the present-day Sarlahi, Mahotari, Dhanusa, Siraha, Saptari and Morang Districts. It has its own script, popularly known as *Mathilakshar* or *Tirahuta* but these days it is written in *Devnagari* script. Maithili spoken in present Dhanusa district of Nepal is considered as the standard one and its dialects are also classified on the basis of the geographic region where the people speak it. Maithili spoken in Sarlahi, Mahotari, Siraha, Saptari and Morang are its principle dialects (Yadav 2054). *Bhojpuri,* the major language of two adjoining Indian states of Bihar and UP, is the third largest language of Nepal and is mostly spoken in the districts of central Tarai-Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, Nawalparasi and Chitwan. Its social and geographical dialects are yet to be explored. Its total number of speakers is 13,79,717 (CBS 1996:19). *Tharu,* the next to Bhojpuri, is spoken by the Tharu community (993388), one of the indigenous ethnic groups of Nepal in the Southern plains from Mechi in the East to Mahakali in the West. *Awadhi,* the major language of Northern India, is mostly spoken in the Rupandehi, Banke, Bardia and Kapilvastu districts of Nepal. Very few researches have been done in this language. *Danuwari,* also considered as the branch of Tharu by some linguists, is the language of the Danuwar Community living in the Eastern Inner Tarai, Sinduli and in the banks of the Tributary rivers of Koshi and Gandaki. *Majhi* is the language of the Majhi

community (fisherman) which is mostly found in the tributary rivers of Koshi and Gandaki. Nearly 11,322 people are supposed to be its speakers *Darai* is mostly spoken in Palpa, Tanahu and Chitwan districts and its total speakers according to 1991 Census is 6520. *Kumhale* is the language of the Kumhale (the earth-pot makers) ethnic groups, and is spread in various parts of the country. It is believed that nearly 3000 speakers of this language live in Palpa only (Gautam 2049; Poudel 2041 VS). A linguistic research reveals that nearly 1500 speakers of Bote language live in Palpa, Tanahu, Gulmi, Parbat, Baglung, and Syanja (Paudyal: 2041).

The important Tibeto-Burman Language of Nepal are: (1) Newari, (2) Thami; (3) Chepang; (4) Tamang; (5) Magarati; (6) Gurung; (7) Sherpa; (8) Thakali; (9) Jirel; (10) Byasi; (11) Hayu (12) Dhimal; (13) Meche; (14) Raji; (15) Kagate; (16) Murmi; (17) Pahari; (18) Kusunda; (19) Lepcha; (20) Ghale; (21) Manang; (22) Raute; (23) Dura; (24) Kham; (25) Tichhurong; (26) Dolpa; (27) Tibetan (28) Lhoke; and (29) Kaike. Rai-Karti language also falls in Tiebeto-Burman Family group which include: (1) Limbu; (2) Aathapaharia; (3) Belahara; (4) Chhintang; (5) Mugali; (6) Fangduwali; (7) Yakkhya; (8) Yamphe; (9) Southern Lorung; (10) Northern Lorung; (11) Puma; (12) Chamling; (13) Dungmali; (14) Kulunga; (15) Nechhring; (16) Chhukwa; (17) Sangpang; (18) Mewohang; (19) Pongyong; (20) Bantawa; (21) Khalinga; (22) Dumi; (23) Koyu; (24) Sunuwar; (25) Bahinga; (26) Gerunga; (27) Churasya; (28) Tilunga; (29) Thulung and (30) Lingkhum (Gautam 2049 VS). Newari, the mother tongue of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, has several dialects as spoken in Dolakha, Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur, Banepa and other parts of the country. As one of he developed language of the Tibeto-Burman family, it has its own script, though it is written in Devnagari script in these days. Newari spoken in Bhaktpur, Kirtipur, Patan (Lalitpur), Banepa-Dhulikhel and Dolakha are its Principal dialects. *Magarati* is spoken by the Magars of Gandaki region, Palpa, Peuthan, Gulmi, Kaski, Salyan and Baglung districts of Nepal and non-Gandaki region. It has several dialects including the two important ones spoken in the East of and West of Gulmi districts (Gautam, 2049:203).

Language Politics in Nepal

In order to study the role or influence of language/s in Nepalese politics, it would be appropriate to study how the rulers of Nepal, since the process of unification was started in 1742 by King Prithivi Narayan Shah, have behaved

the language/s of Nepal in particular. Nepali language had played important role in the unification of Nepal. The inhabitants of Gorkha welcomed Drabya Shah as their king simply because they no longer wanted to Magar kings to be continued in power. The majority Nepali-speaking community and Khasa rulers/*Rajas* of the small principalities, i.e. *Vaises* and *Chaubises* voluntarily and psychologically accepted the dominance of Khas culture and Nepali language under Gorkha rule of King Prithivi Narayan Shah (1722-1775) who gave protection to Nepali language. The Khas speakers felt the feeling of security within the Gorkha Empire. But after Kathmandu valley became the capital of the entire unified Nepal (after the unification of the three kingdoms of Kathmandu valley in 1768) Newari language was also recognized as one of the dominant languages of Nepal. In the post-unification days, the Shah rulers wanted to strengthen Nepali language, and gave special protection to it, which was not accorded to other languages. Linguistically and culturally speaking, the Shahs (1722-1846) and the Ranas (1846-1950) gave special protection to Nepali language and encouraged its modernization and standardization, undermining the rest of the languages of Nepal. During the Rana period, the standardization of literatures, dictionary preparation/making and codification in Nepali were encouraged and *Nepali Bhasa Prakashini Samiti* (Nepali Language Publicity Committee) performed important works in this direction and Nepali, thus, received special protection. With the introduction of multiparty democracy in Nepal in 1951, Nepali continued to play dominant role both in governmental and non-governmental levels. Hindi also played the same role in Nepal's southern plains, Tarai where it became the means of instruction in most of the schools and colleges until 1957. Hindi as a separate discipline was also studied in language groups besides Nepali, Newari and English in educational institutions. Between 1981 and 1991 the share of Nepali speaking population suffered a sharp drop and the number of vernacular identifiers have increased significantly in all language groups. There is an obvious element of alienation from the traditional mode of accepting Nepali silently as a vernacular Nepali has remained the *lingua franca* for majority of the population and all ethnic groups. But among the various traditional ethnic groups only a majority of Magars has identified Nepali as their vernacular. All other linguistic groups have retained their indigenous language as vernacular. (Aditya 1996:69-95) Nepali is a language of inter-communications, of publication, and of governmental communication

(Radio, Television, Post Office, Tele-Communication). It is a standard, state and national language (Sharma and Baral 2055:103-115).

After 1950 various linguistic communities tried to uplift their languages. Hindi in Tarai and Newari in Kathmandu Valley took the leading roles. During 1951-1960, these languages enjoyed absolute freedom, though K.I. Singh Government in 1957 ordered the removal of other languages from school instruction except Nepali (however, some optional languages were prescribed in school curriculum including Ph.D research). With the dissolution of the first democratically elected government in 1960 and with the introduction of the Panchayat system in 1962 under King Mahendra, the concepts of Nepali nationalism/Nepalism and "one nation, one political system" emerged in which Nepali language became the part. In course of inculcating oriental nonparty culture, politics and linguistic sentiments went side by side and linguistic issues remained highly related political issues. The Panchayati rulers never accepted Nepal as the multi lingual society, and never considered language as national property. Language actually was not studied in linguistic sense but strictly in socio-political sense. In the name of national integration, the process of Nepalization was launched since 1960. It tried to Panchayatize the language, culture, and ethnicity. The non-party political system (1962-1989) discouraged other cultural and linguistic sentiments and no investment on development of language was made. The Royal Nepal Academy (RNA) and very few research institutes conducted intellectual researches for the study and survey of languages. Till its alleged involvement in assisting the Tibetans in their revolutionary Free Tibet movement, the US-based Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) conducted linguistic researches on languages on eastern part of Nepal. As the concept of democratic pluralism was not encouraged in politics, philosophy and in language, the non-party Panchayat politicians used Nepali as a lingua franca, as a medium for the expression of political views and desires.

Though Article 10 of the 1962 Panchayati Constitution had provided the Nepalese citizens the right to equality, it did not specify about linguistic equality (HMG 1962:6). It, under Article 4, has given Nepali language the status of national language mentioning nothing about other languages. During 1962-1989, it became the medium of instruction, of media, of parliamentary debates, of deliberations, of the court, etc. Derecognition of local languages, thus, remained the linguistic feature during the Panchayat period. The New Education Plan (NEP), introduced in 1971, discouraged other languages except Nepali as the medium of instruction in schools, however,

some local languages including Hindi and Newari were also prescribed as optional subjects including high level research. The Marich Man Singh Government dereconized the degree of MA in Hindi, Newari and Maithili as a basis of promotion. Except Nepali and English, the Public Service Commission (PSC) recognized no other languages. The linguistic minorities charged the PSC, the government-owned *Sajha Prakashan* (SP) and Royal Nepal Academy (RNA) for not doing justice with their languages. Publication of Newspapers other than Nepali and English were also discouraged. Radio Nepal stopped the news broadcast in Hindi and Newari (Jha 1993:25).

Except the Hindi movement, advocated by G.N. Singh the leader of the then Nepal Sadhavana Parished (NSP) and *Manka Khala* movement advocated by P.R. Tuladhar, Nepal faced no serious important language movements during the Panchayat period. The leaders of the languages movements, particularly Padma Ratna Tuladhar, Gajendra Narayan Singh and Ananda D. Bhatta, criticized the language policy of the Panchayat government and strongly demanded the implementation of liberal language policy giving equal protection to all the languages of the nation. But those personalities during the post *Jana Andolana* days turned into political activists that brought language and politics into closer ties.

With the dispensation of pluralistic democracy in Nepal in 1990 after the historic mass uprising and framing the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 thereafter, Nepal started adopting liberal language policy. The present constitution, under Art. 6. makes a clear distinction between the national language and languages of the nation. The national language, as mentioned in Art. 6 (i), of Nepal shall be Nepali in the Devanagari Script which shall be the official language. All the languages spoken as the mother tongues in the various parts of the Kingdom are considered as the languages of this nation. The Nepalese citizens, under the cultural and Educational Right (Art. 18), are given the right to protect and develop their language and script; and the right to establish schools for providing education to the children up to the primary level in their mother tongues (HMG 1992). The post 1990 governments also adopted liberal language policies. Soon after the formation of a multi party interim government in 1990, government owned Radio Nepal started its news broadcast in English, Hindi and Newari. In the post-1990 days, the democratically elected governments of Nepal tried to encourage the development and promotion of various languages of the nation. Radio Nepal started its news broadcast in few other local languages including in Magar and

Tamang. In order to encourage other local languages, the newly established Nepal Television (NTV) also started the production of some Tele-films on small screen in various local languages. Members of Parliament (MPs) have addressed in their own languages though the Parliament Rules, 1991 clearly mentions that Nepali should be the medium of expression and parliamentary deliberations. The Mayor of Kathmandu Municipal Corporation also took Oath in Newari. The publications of newspapers in various languages were also promoted and, accordingly, few more newspapers were also published in private sector. However, the government provided no additional facilities to them.

The Politics of Language Planning in Nepal

The study of language politics would be completely inadequate without the proper study of language planning, policy and programmes adopted by the various governments of Nepal. Language planning and policy, thus, are the important aspects of language politics. Language Planning is a subject of Applied socio-linguistics and "is a term used in socio-linguistics to refer to a systematic attempt to solve the communication problems of a community by studying the various languages or dialects it uses and developing a realistic policy concerning the selection and use of different languages" (Crystal: 1985: 174). It is a branch of socio linguistics which is a developing field that sees language as a social resource. Language requires planned action if it is to be used to its full potential. Language planning is done through the cooperative efforts of political, economic, educational and linguistic authorities. (Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971; Eastman 1983: IX) The socio linguists advocated the idea of "language as a plannable societal resource" in the 1960's (Eastman 1983:X) but it is gaining currency in these days. Language policies are formulated, codified, elaborated, and implemented differently by different nation states. The formulation of a language policy is a process of deliberation and decision-making. A number of social, economic, and political factors of policy formulation are important in this direction. The main political deliberative factor in language policy formation is the goal of the body (the nation) formulating the policy. When a language policy is codified, the planners should remember that people in modern speech communities want their language "to be more than neat and trim and handy." They want it to be a reflection of who they are: who they have been as well as who they will be." (Eastman 1983:7; Fishman 1974: 15-33)

The Multi-lingual states of the world have adopted different strategies and policies in language planning. The Swiss model of language planning is considered by some linguistics as the best model in the world. The Swiss confederation has recognized four official languages-French, German, Italian and Romansh. According to 1990 census, 63.6 percent of the entire population has German as "native tongue", 19.2 percent French, 7.6 percent Italian, 0.6 percent Romansh, 8.9 percent miscellaneous; 19.9 percent Slavic languages, 1.7 percent Spanish, 1.4 percent Portuguese, 0.9 percent Turkish and 0.9 English (Rumantsha: 1996: 19-20). Out of 26 member contons and half cantons, seventeen are German speaking, four French speaking, and one Italian speaking and four have more then one language. Three of these are bilingual, whilst the fourth is trilingual. Besides these, there are also the languages of the migrant workers and other immigrants that are not Swiss national languages (Rumantscha 1996:19). India, the world's biggest democratic and multilingual state, has, under Article 343 (1) recognized Hindi as language of the Union and English as the auxiliary language at least for fifteen years. But India has failed to undermine the role of English after fifteen years of the promulgation of the constitution in 1949. The Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India relating to Article 344(1) and 351, has included 15 other provincial/state languages in the list. The government, under Article 351, is committed to the development and standardization of Hindi. In the US, Speakers of languages other than English are all supposed to be in the "melting pot" together and emerge speaking English. As a consequence, "the American English has some of the flavor of the various ingredients melted together in it" (Eastman 1983:2).

There has been no systematic and scientific language planning in Nepal as it is in other countries of the world. Even after 1950, Nepal stressed on one language policy and encouraged Nepali undermining others. Even after the implementation of the 1990 constitution, language planning has not been done properly.

The Politics of Linguistic Minorities and Small Languages

In order to study the language politics, it would be essential to study how the government behaves with the linguistic minorities and smaller languages. The culture of a country in fact is judged from the way it treats its minority groups and the way it gives respect to them. The social, cultural and political identity of the people is linked with the language they speak. In a multi-

lingual society like India, the politics of language becomes a challenging issue. "Since each of India's linguistic minorities are quite different.... Some minorities speaking 'unrecognized' languages have demanded statehood. This demand is often made by those linguistic groups concentrated in a particular region of a state, where the group has a strong sense of its own distinctive identity. The largest *"stateless"* linguistic minorities in India are Bhili Boro, Dogri, Gondi, Ho, Konkan, Kurukh/Oraon, Mundari, Sindhi, Santali and Tulu (Weiner 1989:43-47). India's religious, linguistic, tribal and caste minorities want the demand for a "hōmeland", "linguistic recognition", "reservation", and "security" (Wiener, 1980: 62-70).

The imposition of a dominant culture and language by centralized leaders often become a problem in the Third World countries. In the name of development, progress and national unity, indigenous cultures have been destroyed leading to their marginalization in society. Language has become an important tool by which the state has tried to subjugate these peoples by denying them the right to use and develop their mother tongues. Language is manifestly part of culture. The state's purposive interference with the mother tongues of tribal peoples has done tremendous violence to their culture in as much as culture is largely transmitted through language (Nikhel Nayyar 1995:166). Minority languages in multilingual India is facing dozens of problems (Daswani, 1992: 239–246).

The concept of linguistic minorities is not defined in the present constitution of Nepal but the meaning of the expression would be clear from a reading of Article 18 which gives every community "the right to protect and develop its language, script and culture and to establish school for providing education to the children upto the primary level in their mother tongues." (HMG 1990) But the linguistic minorities in Nepal have repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction over the fact that the frequent changes in governments and political instabilibility had adversely affected their linguistic interests. Article 25 (3) further mentions that "the state shall have the social objective of establishing a harmony amongst the various castes, tribes, religions, languages, color and communities." Similarly, Article 26(2) mentions that "the state shall promote the language, literature, script, art and culture of all." Language movements in Nepal are, however, trying to utilize their languages as social and cultural symbols to mobilize people to foster the cultures associated with them.

There has been a strong argument among some of the leading linguists that in multi-lingual and multi cultural societies, diversity of cultures,

languages, and religions weaken the processes of national integration, harmony and development. But the opponents of this approach strongly advocate that cultural plurality or multiplicity, if materialized properly, politically and socially, can bring unity among the various linguistic and ethnic communities/groups; can promote or accelerate the pace of development; can strengthen or consolidate the process of democratization and so on (Yadav 1996:233-239). The present Constitution of Nepal is committed to safeguard the interests of all the linguistic minorities in Nepal. The chief feature of the present language policy is that it has allowed mother tongue instruction at primary level of education (up to class five). and gradual switch over to modern standard languages–Nepali or English–as a media of instruction at the High School, college or at the university level.

Decline/Decay of Minor Languages in Nepal

His Majesty Government of Nepal (HMG/N), as some linguists and speech communities point out, has not shown positive attitude for the development of small languages, their writing system, and scripts. Some of the languages, which have recently developed writing systems, had received no government encouragement. There are a larger number of lesser known languages, which are endangered and likely to die out in the lack of their use and documentation (Yadav, 1996:233-239). In order to promote these lesser known languages, the government has to play key role in this direction. With the increasing process of Nepalization, speakers of minority languages, gradually tend toward adopting Nepali language and eventually losing their own mother tongues. Ten Rai Languages have already decayed/died and another twelve ones are on the verge of extinction (Yadav, 1996:233-239). This is the hara-kiri, the suicide of language identity. These lesser known languages are facing identity crisis from the so-called dominant languages. The present constitutional and legal provisions and measures undertaken by the HMG to promote and preserve the interests of the linguistic minorities (including the endangered linguistic groups) are not adequate. Except those languages which have rich written tradition (Nepali/Maithili, Newari, Limbu), the smaller and *lesser known languages* comparatively need more government protection and encouragement to preserve their own identity. The decline of languages "must ultimately have political and economic causes. In our time, political speech and writing are supposed to be largely the defense of the indefensible. In today's world, language cannot be kept out of politics. All issues are

political issues and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer." (Orwell:1985).

Politics of Spoken Languages, and Medium of Instruction

Indian politics, as Morris-Jones (1967:41) and Palmer (1970:3-4) opine, is the mixing up of three levels of language i.e., modern, traditional and saintly ones which give Indian politics its distinctive character. Regarding modern languages of politics in India, Morris-Jones (1967:41) writes. "This Modern language of politics is the languages of the Indian Constitution and the courts: of parliamentary debate, of the higher administration, of the upper levels of all the main political parties of the entire English press and much of the Indian language press. It is a language, which speaks of politics and interests; programs and plans. It expresses itself in arguments and representations, discussions and demonstrations, deliberations and decision." Similarly, the languages at the state, district and local levels throughout most of India are considered as the traditional languages. Languages used by saintly politicians like Gandhi, Vabe, and JP Narayan are languages of saintly politics. Like in India, mostly the illiterate people use the traditional language of Nepalese politics in the remote areas of the kingdom. With the extension of party networks in Nepal after 1990, the increasing number of NGOs, INGOs and educational institutions and the activation of educational lights, local party cadres and opinion leaders, the traditional languages, shaped and influenced by local political groups and leaders, are gradually replaced by the modern ones even in the backward villages. In the urban centres modern languages are used but the illiterate masses do not easily understand the modern language used by the urbanite elites. Thus, a clear distinction is noticed in the use of the language in the rural and urban areas and between the elites and the masses. Instead of *Sri Pancha Maharaja Dhiraj Firti Sabari Hoivaksyo,* (the King returned back home), the illiterate villagers use the common and informal language like *Raja Aaya* (The King came).

   The study of attitudes towards spoken languages and the medium of instruction in educational institutions are important aspects of language politics. The use and practice of standard languages in educational institutions as some linguist believe, has led to an attitude of neglect, humiliation and depreciation to local/unstandard languages. "The concept of a standard language has some how reduced the spoken language to a symbol of

backwardness. The whole education system has very hostile and demeaning attitudes towards spoken languages. They are innocent villagers. They cannot speak, they do not have a language, are some of the humiliating expressions used by the people who are proficient in the standard language, lack of knowledge of a particular standard languages is many times reduced to not having a language.... So even if there are primers in the mother tongues, since the teachers prefer to talk in the standard language and is hostile towards his students language, the purpose of making primers in mother tongue is totally defeated." The middle class, at times overly, and at other times subtly, use our command over a dominant language, or the language of the rulers, to subjugate and dominate the toiling masses. The rise of regional linguistic identities had developed themselves as a reaction to the domination of standard language." (Saxena and Mahendroo 1995: 144-157). In Nepal also, the teachers prefer to use standard language in school instruction and consequently, the languages of the minority groups remain neglected. Even the textbooks are written in standard Nepali.

Politics of The English Language

Though the present constitution has not specifically mentioned the role of English in Nepal, but in practice it has become a language of mass media, academic seminar and symposium, the library, public administration, diplomatic business, higher level academic and research institutions and register level languages. Nepal's heavy dependence on foreign aid, its diplomatic relations with more than 100 nation-states; the growing of NGOs and INGOs and Job opportunities to Nepalese in these institutions and abroad and a number of factors have contributed the gravity of English in the lives of Nepalese people.

Politics of Link Language

In the multilingual society like Nepal, the study of inter community communication or *Lingua Franca* which is often referred to as a "link language" or "auxiliary language" becomes an important aspect of language politics. Linguistically speaking, *lingua franca* is a term popularly used in socio linguistics and often in every day speech to refer to an auxiliary language use to enable routine communication to take place between group of people who speak different native languages (Crystal 1985:180). In simplest terms, a language which is used among the speakers of different languages is a *lingua franca*, which can also be a native language of one of the groups or

it could be a language which isn't spoken as the first or native language of one of the groups (Rai 1995:53). English is the world's most common *lingua franca*, followed by French but other languages are also widely used. In East Africa, Swahili in many parts of West Africa, Hausa is used (Crystal 189), Nepali is broadly used as the *lingua franca* in Nepal among different communities. In the hills and in the mountains, the speakers of the Tibeto-Burman languages are often found to use Nepali as their link language. Educated native speakers of the Tarai, in most cases, tend to use Hindi as *lingua franca* for inter-community communication (Yadav 235). The Bantawa, the Kulung and the Thulung dialects within the Rai community in some parts of eastern hill districts and Bhojpuri and Maithili in some parts in southern plains also perform this role in a limited form. However, missing links are also seen in link language. Several factors have contributed to the consolidation of English language as the *lingua franca* and its maximum use in higher administrative, educational, political and diplomatic fields in Nepal.

Politics of Language Standardization and Modernization

Most of the languages of Nepal are facing the problems of standardization. No doubt, Nepali, Newari, Rai and Maithili are rich in literary heritage but they have mostly amassed literary and religious vocabulary earlier usage, which have restricted to certain social groups. But the process of the standardization of language in Nepal has been seriously challenged and threatened by the corrupt political leaders and administrators. Most of the top ranking political leaders, senior administrators, army and police officers in Nepal use bad, abusive or slang words which has virtually degraded or corrupted the language. If this process continues in future, the language of these seniors would be considered as a base or vulgular language, which is always disliked by the civilized linguists and academicians. George Orwell (1985:420-436) has rightly remarked that if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. Schlesinger (1985:437-450) has viewed that the the corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. The corrupt practices followed by the Nepalese politicians and top ranking civil servants and their inefficient, incapable, selfish, shortsighted, and ill-behavior have consequently led to the corruption of language as a whole in Nepal (Dahal 1998b).

Linguists also express their dissatisfaction over the differences between the standard language and local dialects. Leading Indian linguist, Vera Vera Rao has opined that there is nothing like standard language of the civil people

and that the rest are dialects... is the language of the working class? Why is it called a dialect? Why is the language of ... considered standard language? ... Why is the Brahmin's language called a standard language and the working people's dialect (Saxena and Mahendroo: 1995: 144-157). The difference between standard language and local dialects in some cases are symptomatic of the majority-minority; dominant-subordinate; privileged, under privileged dynamics relating to ethnic, cultural, social and politico-economic spheres of life of a particular nation-state. It represents state intervention in language programs, policies and planning which have serious implication as far as issues of language vis a vis power, privilege, economic and educational opportunities and national regional identities are concerned (Saxena and Mahendroo 1995:144). Regarding the standardization of language, teachers and the native speakers of a particular language differ much. The teachers. stressing the standardization of school text books, view that their students would remain backward if they are taught is *dehate* or *Gaulle Bhasa* (Village language) instead of a standard language. But others feel that the mother tongue should be used in instruction, examination and for other purposes (Saxena and Mahendroo 1995:144-157). These local languages continue to discharge a pre-functionary role limited to routine communicative expressions. In certain areas of social communication, the local languages of Nepal, except English, may become the medium of cultural expression, whereas English dominates other technical and advanced fields, matters of higher educational research and development. Language cannot grow on their own to a standardized level of communication unless they have a determined state or institutional support (Talgeri 1995:201-205). But the smaller and under developed languages of Nepal have not been provided with institutional support of the state. The present constitutional and legal system of Nepal has tried to escape from this inequality. Article 11 of the present Nepalese Constitution provides right to equality to all citizens. Article 19 provides all linguistic communities to develop their language and Article 6 considers all the language spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal as the languages of the nation (HMG 1990). Under Article 18, it has provided the right to establish mother tongue education up to primary level. But these constitutional provisions are yet to be realized in practice in Nepal due to the lack of a number of factors including the lack of resources, educational materials, teachers and so on.

Political Register and Language Politics

Socio-linguists stress that effective communication demands not only the grammatically correct utterances but situationally appropriate also. Language has to be appropriate to the speaker, receiver, situation and subject matter (Rai 1995: 49). In this direction, the study of political register becomes particularly important. Register is a variety of languages defined according to its use in social situations, e.g., a register of scientific and religious subjects (Rai 1995 49). As the politicians during their political gaming, commonly use political and constitutional registers their study become particularly important. Nepali, however, is not enough to meet all the technical terms and for this reason, the use of English is growing day by day. Besides political register, medical, legal, technical, engineering and other registers are flourishing these days in Nepal. The general people who are mostly illiterate express their dissatisfaction with the fact that the language of law, constitution, government document and party leaders are not easily understood because they are not culturally grounded in social lives of people.

Political Parties and Language Politics in Nepal

It would be essential to have a bird's eye view on the attitudes and behaviors of various political parties of Nepal towards the languages of Nepal. The principle political parties of Nepal, after the restoration of Multi Party Democracy (MPD) in 1990, held almost similar views regarding languages. Their election manifestoes published during 1991 and during mid term elections, (1994) showed almost similar views regarding languages. Both the Nepali Congress (NC), and the Madav Nepal and KP Oli led Communist Party of Nepal, Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), the partners during the historic mass uprising of 1990 had tried to encourage the development of all the languages of the nation. The two Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) held almost similar views (NC 1991; CPN UML 1991; NDPs 1991). The Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP), in its Election Manifesto published in Hindi and English, is in favour of ending discriminations in all fields including in language (NSP: 1991). The major political parties also followed almost similar language policy in the parliamentary elections held in May 1999.

Language Problems in Nepal

Language controversy remained a burning issue in Nepal since the political change of 1951. Nepal Tarai Congress (NTC) since its establishment in 1951, gave a clarion call for the recognition of Hindi as a second language of

Nepal. Among the linguistic communities in Tarai, the Hindi movement took a dramatic turn in 1956 when KI Singh led United Democratic Party (UDP) Government articulated to pose certain challenge to Hindi by issuing a government directive which aimed at the removal of Hindi from the school education. "Save Hindi committees were formed to suport Hindi movement which was supported by important political parties during the 50's–Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), and Nepal Praja Parishad (NPP) (Gaige 19975). In 1957, V.N. Jha, the leader of the NTC stated that they would not allow the removal of Hindi from the medium of education." During the Panchayat days, other languages except Nepali remained neglected and the New Education Plan System (NEPS) introduced in 1971 discouraged the use of other languages except Nepali as the medium of instruction in educational institutions including Hindi (Mishra 1990). However, Hindi was prescribed as optional subjects both in school and colleges.

The regionalization of politics and political parties has encouraged the regionalization of languages too in Nepal. The various linguistic communities, including the minorities since 1990 have made various attempts to promote their own languages. Hindi in Tarai and Newari in Kathmandu Valley are taking the leading roles. Gore B. Khapangi, former school teacher and later turned ethnic activist, had organized the mountain and hill ethnic and linguistic groups *Se Ta Ma Gu Ra Li* and had championed for the advocacy of their languages including their proper role in politics. Se Ta Ma Gu Ra Li is the abbreviation of Nepal's six Mongoloid hill Tribes. *Se* Stands for Sherpa, *Ta* for Tamang, *Ma* for Magar, *Gu* for Gurung, *Ra* for Rai and *Li* for Limbus. For them language has become a powerful means to achieve their political ends—to have a due share in the central decision making process. In spite of these small efforts, speech communities of the smaller and lesser-known languages in Nepal still feel insecure due to uncertain prospect they face. They strongly oppose the dominant role of Nepali and demand complete equality in this respect. Various linguistic groups as mentioned in Art 6, are also challenging the constitutional provisions concerning language. Some political parties including Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) have made a clarion call for the recognition of the regional language as official languages in local bodies. The Kathmandu Municipal Corporation (KMC) declared Newari as its official language whereas Rajbiraj and Janakpur Municipalities and Dhanusha District Development Committee (DDC) declared Maithili as their official language. This process of recognition became a subject of heavy controversy in the

political circle. Even the court seriously questioned the constitutionality and legality of such declaration. The Supreme Court of Nepal (SCN), on April 14, 1998, declared it unconstitutional on the ground that Article 6 of the present Constitution clearly mentions that "the Nepali language shall be the official language" of Nepal (HMG 1991).

The minority linguistic groups have openly challenged the verdict of the court on the ground that it had violated the right to languages of smaller groups and undermined the role of other languages except Nepali. In order to challenge the state, the linguistic activists formed "United Struggle Committee for Language Right" with Amaresh Narayan Jha of *Nepal Maithil samaj* as its convenor. The three advisors of the Committee were one MP associated with *Manka Khala* (Newari) movement, Padma Ratna Tuladhar and two University Professors: Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan, and Dr. Subodh Narayan Jha. The members of the Committee represented various linguistic and ethnic activists like Suresh Ale Magar from *Akhil Nepal Janatati Sangh,* Rajbhai Jakami from *Newa Rastriya Andolana,* Parasuram Tamang from *Nepal Janajati Mahashangh,* MP Pari Thapa from *Akhil Nepal Janajati Sammellan,* Dr. Om Gurung from *Akhil Nepal Buddhi Jibi Sangh,* Mukti Pradhan from *Nepal Rastriya Buddhijibi Sangh,* Krishna Sen from *Akhil Nepal Jana Sanskritic Sangh,* Suresh Karmacharya from *Nepal Janajati Mukti Andolan,* Dhirendra Premarshi from *Maithil Vikas Manch,* Krishna P. Shrestha from *Dwalkha Gwahar Khalak* and Biswonath Pathak from *Awadhi Sanskritic Bikash Parishad* (Maharjan 1998: 46-47).

In order to pressure the SCN to rethink over its verdict, this committee started campaigning and organized a seminar on "Use of National Languages in Local Bodies and the Supreme Court's Order", which was addressed by MPs and language activists-Padma R. Tuladhar, Krishna Gopal Shrestha, Hridayesh Tripathi, Mahanta Thakur, Malla K. Sundar, Keshav Sthapit and Suresh Ale Magar. The speakers strongly demanded the equal treatment to all the languages and opposed the decision of the Court. Moreover, further meetings were also held in Rajbiraj on May 11, 1998 and other places. As part of their protest, *Akhil Nepal Janajati Sangh* on March 31, 1998, submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister against the Court's order. The order, as one Newari Daily reported, was also condemned by Bam Dev Gautam, General Secretary of CPN-ML and Prachanda, the General Secrtary of CPN-Unity Centre *(Sandhaya Times* 1998; Maharjan 1998:46-47). Appeals had also been made with the Public Service Commission (PSC), a constitutional body, to show due respect to all the languages of the nation

(Yatri 2053:292). The decision of the Supreme Court of Nepal (SCN) of Jestha 18, 2056 B.S. regarding the language issue further brought the various linguistic minorities of different geographical regions into one common forum to challenge/oppose the court's decision. The *Manka Khala* movement had also challenged the political system by declaring *Nepal-Bandh* and other pressure activities in the capital city. The combined efforts of various linguistic groups to oppose the government and court's decision regarding language had created further problems in this direction. The decay of smaller or lesser-known languages and the government's failure to promote them have added some more challenges/problems in this direction. The linguistic minorities are dissatisfied with the government on the ground that it had not paid proper heed for the promotion and modernization of their languages, scripts and literatures. Some linguistic groups in Nepal point out that language planning in Nepal has not been done properly and scientifically, while other claim that language has been highly politicized in Nepal

Recommendations

In to-days's Nepal, language issues has been emerging as an acute problem. In order to solve the existing problems, proper attention should be paid in time so that it may not emerge as a severe one. In order to solve the existing problems, languages in Nepal must be studied in three dimensions: language as a problem, language as a right and language as a resource. Language problem, as other problems of the society, might be studied, resolved peacefully and handled positively by the government in consultation with various linguistic groups of the nation. Their right to develop their own languages must be recognized in practice. The use of vernacular languages in education as mentioned in the 1951-UNESCO Report must be encouraged upto High School level. The Socio-cultural provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16, 1966 should strictly be implemented. Moreover, the Directive Principles and Policies of the State concerning language, as outlined in Article 25 and 26 of the present Nepalese Constituation, should also be effectively implemented into practice. Languages, as Fishman (1984:34) opines, must be treated as important resources of the nation and proper attention should be given to protect, promote and develop them. It is an important "resource of value" but it is not a resource in the same sense as agriculture, labor, industry and waterpower. A scientific and most up-to-date

linguistic survey to determine the status and position of various languages of Nepal should be conducted and accordingly, a scientific, need-based language promotion and planning policy should be formulated and promoted. The government should pay due attention to the protection and promotion of the inchoate and lesser-known languages, especially to those that are on the verge of decay and mother tongue education institutions in various parts of the country particularly in the remote areas. The recommendations given by *Rastriya-Bhasa Nitisujhab Ayog* (Commission for the Recommendation of National Language Policy) in its reports, (Rastriyabahsa Niti Sujhav Ayog Ko Partibedan) in 1994, (RNSA, 1994) and by the *Rastriya Sanskritik Samiti 2049 VS* (National Cultural Comittee, 1992 (RSS, 1992) should be implemented phase wise with sincere attention. The languages of Nepal are in different status/position, some are unconscious/sleeping and some half conscious, some conscious and some walking. In this context, it must be determined categorically which language needs which status/treatment and which type of phase wise development. Different policies and strategies should be formed to promote them. For Newari and Limbu, which have rich written and literary tradition, only government encouragement is enough for codification and standardization. But for the smaller languages which have their own scripts but have not developed , need different treatment. Special government treatment should be given to those languages, which are on the verge of decay. Similarly, only establishing mother tongue institutions are not enough but they need active government financing and other initiations. Moreover, in order to frame an appropriate, timely and need based language and cultural policy, to develop harmony and cooperation among various linguistic groups, to settle cultural and linguistic problems, to define the role of languages and to conduct high level academic research regularly, special and most representative high-power linguistic and cultural commission should be organized. As the courts are the guardians of the constitutional rights of the citizens, the languages activists should try to pressurize the parliamentarians to amend the constitutional provisions concerning language and create strong lobby and public opinion in their favour. The languages of 61 Jana Jatis (Nepal Rajpatra 2054 VS) should be particularly encouraged and protected by the government.

Conclusion
As the awareness among people of a common linguistic Community identify springing from their shared experience serves the building bloc of national

integration, it is important for the government to accord due place to each language and cultures so that linguistic diversity in the nation attempts to foster purpose politics of nation building. It is equally important to overcome a sense of alienation, seclusion and discrimination and from broader identity.

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