
Paucīsa Varṣakā Bhāṣīka Caroā (henceforth PVBC) contains an assortment of 19 articles on the Nepali language — all written in Nepali. The contributors form a core of eminent linguists and writers of Nepal. It is therefore appropriate to look closely into the contents of PVBC. This review is geared to that goal.

In the present stage of knowledge about the Nepali linguistics, a collection of articles in a book form and dealing exclusively with various aspects of the Nepali language can only be hailed as a significant advance. It is to be regretted though that most contributions have been written with more enthusiasm than caution.

Not all of the contributions contained in PVBC belong to the mainstream linguistics (as admitted by the editor, p. 5). Consequently, the remarks that follow will be restricted primarily to a total of eight "especially technical" (viśega prabhidhika (śāstrīya), editor, pp. 5-6) studies only.

Four other papers, however, also deserve mention. Sapkota's paper ('vyākaranī paṇe janajīvirām roka laṅgānu hūdāina', pp. 14-16) is a variationist's delight, a warning to linguists who view language as a monolithic, static and homogeneous system, and a veritable guide to the sociolinguists of Nepal. Pande "Asim"'s paper ('"dyū, jū" ko prayoga', pp. 21-23) presents a sociolinguistic analysis of the phenomena of verbalization
of respect in Nepali and makes interesting observations on the etymology of respectful suffixes ḣā, ḷ and even ḷā. Parajuli's paper ('सिस्ता तत्त्व ग्रंविगा नेपाल...\textemdash; pp. 33-45) begins with a linguistic description of what may loosely be called 'formal' (i.e. 'standard', 'educated', 'literary', etc.) and 'informal' (i.e. 'substandard', 'illiterate/rustic', 'conversational', etc.) varieties of Nepali, but ends up discussing the pedagogical and even sociopolitical implications of a possible coordination between the two varieties. Acharya's paper ('हलान्ता बहिःकरादक्षी जिङ्दो-नेपालिवासम्...\textemdash; pp. 212-232) raises questions which may have significant linguistic implications. Basically, however, it addresses itself to a chronological survey of pros and cons of such "schools" of Nepali orthographic reform as halanta vaiṅkārabāda, sajilobāda, and janajībrobāda, and it seeks to establish the superiority of Acharya's own "school" (जिङ्दो- नेपाली बहिःबादा) over others. Nothing further will be said about these studies here.

The eighth "especially technical" studies are discussed below in the order these have been presented in the book under review.

Bandhu's paper ('पालेकी पाद्यसिद्धान्तवा नेपालितक विश्लेषणको\textemdash; pp. 46-63) presents a simple and lucid account of the Piskean Tagmemics, and sketches cursorily the mechanisms through which the Nepali sentences may be shown to be derived transformationally as it were from a limited core of basic clauses, as envisioned in the Tagmemic model. Writing about the Tagmemic model (or about any modern, i.e. western linguistic model for that matter), or writing a fragment of the Tagmemic grammar through the medium of Nepali is a laudable endeavor, and Bandhu deserves our sincere praise and admiration. One wishes though that the author had consistently provided the original English technical terminologies of Tagmemics within brackets when these are rendered into Nepali (a practice well
observed by other writers, e.g. Dahal, B. Pokharel, etc. in the volume). Such a practice would indeed be useful at the present state of art when no standard technical Nepali vocabulary exists. This would also help the reader, like myself for instance, to follow the main argument of the paper.

Sharma's paper (‘Kahē daikēna esiālā pratiśṭhāṇi bhāṣāśārēṇā khīmābāta banite sahyojakahartā’, pp. 64-77) deals with the use and functions of the so-called "conjunctive participles" in a few representative languages of South Asia. Data are provided from a total of five languages of three language families, e.g. Indo-Aryan (Nepali and Hindi); Tibeto-Burman (Newari); and Dravidian (Telugu and Tamil).

That the nonfinite verbals with conjunctive functions exist in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian is well known. That this phenomenon has areal implications has been ably demonstrated by Colin Masica (Defining a Linguistic Area: South Asia. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Sharma's chief contribution lies in an extensive analysis of morphology and syntax of such nonfinite verbal participles which conjoin sentences in Nepali, Hindi, Newari, Telugu and Tamil. Sharma's analysis yields an interesting pattern of behavior: while Nepali, Newari, Tamil and Telugu continue to use nonfinite verbal participles with conjunctive functions, Hindi has shun such an areal characteristic and has adopted instead constructions which are more akin to western languages, especially English. Would a conscious or unconscious process of 'Westernization' or 'Hindization' lead to a similar phenomenon in Nepali (a process already in existence in Nepali, as noted by Sharma p. 72) remains to be seen.

In sum, Sharma's paper makes a significant contribution to the typological study of South Asian languages and linguistics.
Chapagai's paper ('nepālī avukaranātmaka śabdaharuṇa-pravahana-kriyā' pp. 78-93) presents a thorough analysis of the morphology of onomatopoeic, i.e. imitative words in Nepali. Reduplication-partial or complete, reversed or nonreversed - appears to be the most productive (if not universal) process of formation of such imitative words in Nepali.

Dahal's study ('lekhya aṃmagrīka bhāṣāka vyākhyāko rūparekha' pp. 101-122) deals with grammatology in general and graphemics in particular. Stressing the value of the old written texts of a language such as Nepali, it discusses in sufficient detail the ways in which the linguistic interpretation of such old documents may be made by a historical and/or a descriptive linguist. A few of the major problems which a linguist may face in this venture are also discussed with suitable examples.

B. Pokharel's paper ('nepālīka kehī dhvanitātvinā behorāhraka', pp. 123-142) deals with the historical phonology of Nepali (eastern dialect). In it, the author has undertaken to trace the sound changes which characterize the origin and development of Nepali from Sanskrit through Prakrit. The author discusses such sound changes as: (a) devoicing (of the final b) (b) vocalization, (c) cerebralization, (d) nasalization, (e) declusterization (in final position), (f) vowel rounding (as a result of progressive assimilation), (g) deaspiration (three types), and (h) 'flapping' of retroflex stops (called luoṭhībhavanā by the author, p. 139).

Only two remarks -- one general and one specific -- will be made about B. Pokharel's presentation.

General. A complete account of the historical phonology of Nepali would constitute a description of the earlier stage(s) of the language, a series of statements of phonological changes, and a description of the sound system of the present-day Nepali. If phonological information on earlier stage(s) as well as the
present stage of Nepali is available, then the historical linguist is well advised to proceed with making statements about the characteristic sound changes of this language. If on the other hand, the description of the modern stage is lacking, then facts about the historical phonology of Nepali must be specifically presented. Since no adequate synchronic description of Nepali is available (to the best of my knowledge), a linguistic historian of Nepali must of necessity be specifically careful and even cautious in presenting the facts about the origin and development of this language.

Specific. The task of a historical phonologist of Nepali would be to come up with the best set of statements of sound change which will capture the significant generalizations about this language. B. Pokharel's art of writing phonological rules leaves much to be desired, as will be apparent from the discussion below.

B. Pokharel's phonological rules of First Deaspiration, Second Deaspiration, and Third Deaspiration (pp. 136-139) operate exactly under similar environments and are thus collapsible into one single rule, of the following type:

\[ \text{P-rule of Deaspiration} \]

\[ \text{\( c^h \longrightarrow \{ V - V \} \)} \]

The above rule states that in Nepali an aspirated consonant becomes unaspirated intervocally and finally (word or syllable -- a lot more data need to be investigated in order to determine this).

Also, \( [h] \) is treated on par with other voiced aspirates (e.g. \( [g^h, d^h, j^h \) etc]) in B. Pokharel's phonological analysis. This practice may be in vogue in traditional historical phonology, but a closer look at the Nepali data suggests
that B. Pokharel’s practice to include the P-rule of [h]—
deletion within the P-rule of Second Deaspiration (p. 137)
is unwarranted. A few of B. Pokharel’s examples are listed below:

1. [sudʰar] → [sudar]  
2. [bagʰ] → [bag]  
3. [bhānini] → [bānī]  
4. [sahu] → [sað]  
5. [mēhājan] → [majān]

Examples 3–5 demonstrate that upon deletion (not ‘deaspiration’)  
of [h] in intervocalic positions, a reduction in the number  
of syllables is caused. The rule of deaspiration (examples  
1–2), on the other hand, does not cause the syllable reduction,  
and hence ought not to be grouped with the rule of [h]—de- 
letion. In other words, the rule of [h]—deletion and the rule  
of deaspiration should be treated distinctly as two separate  
rules.

B. Pokharel provides a set of six statements in order to  
describe the phenomenon of ‘flapping’ (Kuṇḍikābhāvana, p. 139).  
Once again, only one phonological rule would be sufficient  
to describe the data adequately. A tentative formulation  
of this rule would sound as follows: In Nepali, a voiced  
retroflex stop (aspirated or unaspirated) becomes a (re- 
troflex) flap syllable finally and intervocally when no  
consonant -- homorganic or geminate -- intervenes between the  
preceding vowel and the voiced retroflex stop in question.  
Note that the constraint on the P-rule is crucial. This  
constraint, for example, disallows the Nepali words [pinḍ]  
pinḍa to become *[pinr], and [laḍḍu] laḍḍu to become *[laṛr].  
Words like /hoʃ/, laṛnu/, guṭʰ/, /praʊnʰ/, and paḍʰai/, on  
the other hand, meet the structural description of the above  
rule and become [hoʃ], [laṛnu], [guṭʰ], [praʊnʰ] and [paḍʰai].
respectively in their actual pronunciation. Upon further inquiry, this phenomenon of 'flapping' may turn out to be a pan-Indo-Aryan feature. But this is hardly the place for that.

As a matter of fact, in a few dialects of Nepali, especially in colloquial styles, such retroflex flaps change further into dental taps (called rakāṛākṣanava by B. Pokharel, pp. 140-141). Maybe this rakāṛākṣanava is not an isolated phenomenon in Nepali after all. It is quite likely that a more general socio-stylo-dialectal rule of the following type is operative in these dialects of Nbpali:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{i, u} & \text{r, n, s, b} \\
\hline
\text{f, h, f, s} & \\
\end{array}
\]

/ colloquial Nepali/ less elegant style

Diaregard of the above facts seems to have marred the quality of an otherwise excellently written paper by B. Pokharel.

M. Pokharel's article ('nepāli bālāghaṭa ra avalokana', pp. 143-159) deals with stress and intonation in Nepali. The study represents the research findings on the topic of stress as epitomised in the writings of Professor Daniel Jones and the phoneticians of his generation -- published mostly in the late 1950's. References are no doubt made to works ranging from the ancient Sanskrit writings such as the Vedas down to the modern English works published in the late 1970's, but
unfortunately the recent findings do not seem to be incorporated into the main body of the paper. Attention may therefore be drawn to an early work of Peter Ladefoged (Three Areas of Experimental Phonetics, London: Oxford University Press) wherein it is demonstrated with conclusive evidence that prevailing opinion on the nature and definition of stress and its physiological correlates is simply untenable.

In a 17-page article, M. Pokharel devotes a total of 12 pages to the summary—discussion of works of eminent phoneticians on the topic (a conscientious reader had better consult the original works themselves!) and only two-and-a-half pages each to stress and intonation in Nepali. What is most irksome is that almost every second sentence of M. Pokharel is a paraphrase—summary of ideas of one linguist or the other (p. 146 consists of 17 lines and about the same number of sentences, but it contains allusions to a total of 9 references in the form of footnotes—to cite only one example).

On p. 155, the reader is left with the unsubstantiated information that three types of stress—syllabic, assimilatory, and sentence—may be recognised in Nepali. Little, however, is said by way of elaboration of the tripartite division, except that the sentence stress is described as if it were emphatic stress (p. 156).

Questions like the following raise themselves: Is stress phonemic in Nepali? What syllable patterns exist in Nepali? What is the relationship between stress and syllabic pattern in Nepali? What stress-placement rules are needed in Nepali? What is the relationship of vowel length (phonemic/non-phonemic?) and stress in Nepali? Do the stressed syllables cause vowel reduction in Nepali? If so, how much, or how little?, and so on. To attempt to address the above
questions would make serious contributions to the rather neglected areas of Nepali phonetics and phonology.

M. Pokharel's paper is full of serious misprints -- far too many to be listed here. Technical terms like ānā 'tone', svarṣa 'pitch', and svara 'vowel' or 'human voice' or 'accent' are indiscriminately used (pp. 156-158) and it is difficult to ascertain as to which is which. The English phrase 'sound attributes' is translated into Nepali variously as (a) dhyanigāvahā (p. 143), (b) dhvanipradahā (p. 158), and (c) dhvanipraukhāra (p. 159). In the same breath, 'prosodic features' is translated both as chāndika svarūpa (p. 150) and dhvanigāvahā (p. 143); while 'suprasegmentals' is also translated as dhvanigāvahā. It is true that these terms are on occasions used interchangeably, but it would pay to begin to use them consistently.

The scholarly apparatus of M. Pokharel is of epic proportions -- it contains a total of 106 references cited as footnotes. It would seem then that although M. Pokharel lacks logical rigor and originality, he has acquired the outward semblance of respectable research.

Tripathi's paper ('yāskako nīvacana siddhiṃta ra upadeyata', pp. 185-211) provides an excellent summary-description of Yāska's theory of etymology as propounded in his Nirukta. The Nirukta of Yāska was composed around 700 B.C. as a subsidiary to the study of the Vedas. In other words, the Nirukta was composed in order to explain and interpret the collections of difficult Vedic words (known as the Nīgāṇḍu) by means of proposing derivations of these words from roots as would suit the sense.

Tripathi's paper is both scholarly and clear. Like Ghimire's study (in this volume), the present study would
also prove immensely useful to those linguists of Nepal who are less knowledgeable about the ancient Sanskrit grammatical tradition. It is regrettable that the importance of Vāśka's theory of etymology for the linguistic analysis of Nepali is only stated (pp. 210-211) and not demonstrated.

Ghimire's rather lengthily titled paper (vedāka bhāgako artha nirdhārayama āghāta praṇālīko bhūmikā ra nepālī lagāyata anya paśūtakālina bhāgāma āghātako lopakā kāraya', pp. 233-244) deals with the phenomena of accent (resulting from pitch variation) in Vedic Sanskrit. Ghimire proposes to accomplish two major goals: (i) to analyse the chief characteristics of the Vedic accentual system and to determine the impact of accent on the meaning of a morpheme, word, phrase, or sentence in Vedic Sanskrit; (ii) to account for the causes of the loss of the device indicating marked accentuation in the written texts of Nepali (and other "later" languages). The author succeeds ably in the first goal, except for a minor but nonetheless significant point that one may want to quibble over. This concerns the placing of short u above the accented syllable (i.e. raised in pitch) of the Vedic words satyam and jyeṣṭha cited (p. 241) in order to illustrate the semantic change that is caused by pitch variation in these words. For instance, one cannot ascertain whether the word satyam pronounced with high pitch (i.e. uṣṭta āghāta) on the first syllable means 'true' or 'poverty'. Granted that this confusion may be due to typographical error, but no where in the text does the author explain the difference explicitly.

As regards the reasons leading to the loss of marked accentuation in written Nepali, the author hurriedly lists a set of six main reasons at the very end of the paper (p. 244), and offers no elaboration of them.
In spite of these minor shortcomings, Ghimire’s paper will be read with profit by those linguists of Nepal who are less knowledgeable about the accentual system of Vedic Sanskrit.

To conclude, printed in India by a certain Deepak press, Benaras, and published by the Royal Nepal Academy of Nepal, PVBC is rather poorly edited. Or, to be correct, PVBC displays no palpable mark of having been edited at all, and it contains innumerable typographical errors -- sometimes to the detriment of understanding -- and inconsistent spellings. While the printed essays have been allowed to retain the original spelling system as employed by individual authors (and with good reason), inconsistent spellings of a giyen Nepali word within an individual essay itself are not hard to come by (e.g. विलेगाना vs. विलेगान; अर्को vs. अर्को; भाडबोधा vs. भाडबोधा -- to cite only a few examples). One may wonder if this phenomenon would point to the absence of a stable and standardized spelling system of the Nepali language. English words have been 'Devanagarised' with carelessness (e.g. इन्ट्रोक्सेना vs. इन्ट्रोक्सेना; इंग्लिश vs. इंग्लिश; सुप्रेमेंटलास vs. सुप्रेमेंटलास, etc.).

There is a certain politics of language that the editor wishes to preach through PVBC ('editorial', and p. 2). About which for reasons nonlinguistic the least said the best.

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