

CHAPTER - II

CULTURAL REAWAKENING

Religious and Literary Movements

Prithvinarayan Shaha gave Nepal a political identity. He lifted the Khaskura dialect to the status of official language of Nepal. But Nepalese language took about a century to grow. The man most responsible for giving shape to the modern Nepalese language was Acharya Bhanu Bhakta.

The identity of a nation is born in the sphere of culture and is expressed most powerfully in its language. Bhanubhakta not only gave the Nepalese language an identity by using simple forms and avoiding the use of Sanskrit to a large extent.¹ He gave the Nepalese people a sense of nationhood.² That sense was born out of pain. A country, that seemed to be emerging as the mightiest Himalayan Power spreading from modern Himachal in the west to Sikkim in the east and stretching its wings into Tibet on the north and Indian plains in the South, got a rude shock at the Anglo-

1. Quoted in Mrs. V Sharma, 'Role of Nepali Language and Literature in the Integration and Modernisation of Nepal' in Modernisation in Nepal, pp.230-231.
2. See, Pradhan, Kumar History of Nepali Literature, p.36.

Gorkha war.

The defeat demoralised the Nepalese people as a whole. The Nepalese elite slid into fractional conflicts, palace conspiracy and personal degeneration. Bhimsen Thapa's suicide was representative of the elite crisis, while the common people, smarting under a national humiliation, looked at the intrigues helplessly, Bhanubhakta brought to them a new sense of self-respect and reminded the oligarchy of its responsibility³. Bhanubhakta's work was a critique of the Nepalese power structure. At the same time Bhanu Bhakta's work like Badhu Shiksha and Prasnottari contributed to the spread of knowledge among the common people of the country.⁴

Bhanubhakta's works were a blend of religion, literature and politics. They led to an interesting phase of intellectual history in which political grievances were often expressed in the garb of religion. Madhab Raj Joshi's Arya Samaj movement was a benchmark of the intellectual tradition. Like Bhanubhakta, Madhav Raj Joshi was also persecuted by the state.⁵ Madhav Raj used religious

3. Ibid.

4. Bhanubhakta's Ramayana was translated from Adhyatma Ramanaya, a relatively unknown text varying from Valmiki's Ramayana, reflecting the Bhakti Philosophy. See also Shaha, Rishikesh, Heroes and Builders of Nepal, pp.76-78.

5. V. Sharma, op.cit., p-230.

discourses for the spread of his egalitarian ideas using sastras. He was beaten up by the agents of the Ranas and awarded imprisonment for two years.

If Bhanubhakta formed the classical background of Nepalese literature, the sixty years between 1888 and 1940 constituted a period in which, according to Kumar Pradhan, "Nepali language and literature forged ahead in many new directions".⁶ This period is marked by the beginning of the publication of journals in Nepali. Pradhan notes the publications of two journals about which, however, no detailed information is available. They were (i) Gorkha Bharat Jeevan and (ii) Sudhasagar. Gorkha Bharat Jeevan was published by Motiram Bhatta and his compatriots from Banaras in 1886 and Sudhasagar published at Kathmandu in 1898.⁷ It is possible, however, that the first was the subsidiary of the Hindi journal, Bharat Jeevan, which carried the notice of Gorkha Bharat Jeevan.

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Gorkha Khabar Kagat published from Darjeeling, from 1901 to 1932 by Reverend Ganga Prasad Pradhan, was a mouthpiece of the Scottish Baptist mission at Darjeeling.

6. Pradhan, Kumar, op.cit., p.73.
7. Hutt, Michael James, Nepali, A National Language and Its Literature, pp. 138-142.
8. Kumar Pradhan, op.cit., p-74.

Yet, according to Kumar Pradhan, the Gorkha Khabar Kagat published some literary pieces also.

After a few weeks of the publication of Gorkha Khabar Kagat, the Gorkha Patra⁹ was published from Nepal as a kind of gazette. It carried not only news and notices but also novels, stories, both original and translated, and other prose pieces including essays and criticism.¹⁰

The first non-official paper was Sundari¹¹, published from Banaras since 1906, giving more prominence to poetry. Madhavi, published from Banaras, under the editorship of Rammani Acharyya under the pseudonym of Matri Prasad Adhikari, since 1908, promoted both prose and poetry. By 1907, however, an entirely new vision opened up before Nepalese literary efforts with the publication of Gorkha Shathi¹² from Calcutta. In 1914, Chandra¹³, a monthly from Banaras, declared that "the reason behind the progress of the English, French and German people lay in the development of -----"

9. Pradhan, Kumar, op.cit., p.36. See also Hutt, M. James, Nepali, pp.138-138.
10. After forty five years of publication of Gorkha Patra, this monthly became a bi-weekly and, from the 59th year, a daily.
11. Hutt, M. James, op.cit.,pp. 138-140.
12. Chap 1, Supra.
13. Pradhan, Kumar, op.cit., p.73.

their respective languages". It devoted its attention to the promotion of Nepali language. But Kumar Pradhan considers as "more significant" the publication of Gorkhali¹⁴ a weekly from Banaras in 1915. It was edited by Subba Devi Prasad Sapkota, a former officer of foreign department of the Rana Government.

It gathered around itself important literary and cultural figures like Surya Bikram Jnavali, Mansingh Gurung, Laxmi Prasad Supkota, Dharanidhar Koirala, Dinanath Sharma and Krishna Prasad.¹⁵ Gorkhali was not only a literary journal, it also contained articles on social reforms, spread of education, standardisation of the Nepali language, as well as critiques of Nepal's society and economy. It was closed down in 1922 under the pressure of British Raj, at the peak of the non-cooperation movement. Kumar Pradhan quotes the British envoy to Nepal on Gorkhali:- 'It seems certain that artificially introduced dissatisfaction with their condition, such as the Gorkhali sets itself to bring about, can neither lead to any beneficial change in the form of Government nor to improvement in material prosperity'.

14. Gupta Anirudha, Politics in Nepal, p.23 and op.cit. p.76 See also Majumdar, Kanchanmoy, Nepal and The Indian Nationalist Movement, pp.25-26.

15. Pradhan, Kumar, op.cit., p.76.

In 1918, Chandrika¹⁶ was published by Parashmani Pradhan, from Kurseong of Darjeeling district. Chandrika praised Gorkhali, for its boldness but itself went on boldly and published Dharanidhar Koirala's Udbodhan, a poem that gave a clarion call for Nepalese awakening.¹⁷

It is significant to note that, while the literary endeavours of the Nepalese in Darjeeling and Calcutta, were through secular journals, the literary activities in Nepal had been through books. At first, these endeavours were mixed up with religion. This indicates the control of ^{the} Rana Regime on the intellectual world of the Nepalese. Publishing a book is a one-time affairs but publishing a journal is a recurrent phenomenon and easily attracts law. Publication ^{of a} journal also requires a constant leadership.

Secular literature in the form of books appears in Nepal after world war I. In 1919 was published Siksha Darpan written by Baburam Achariya. In this book Ranashahi was compared with the "Shogunate"¹⁸ in Japan. The significance of this comparison was almost revolutionary.

16. Hutt, Michael James, Nepali, op.cit. p.139.

17. Ibid. p.77.

18. Shogunate was a hereditary military dictatorship whereby the greatest feudal family exercised political power relegating the King to venerable obscurity. See E. Herbert Norman, Japan's Emergence As A Modern State p.11.

'Shogunate' in Japan was a feudal clique that had petrified the monarch into a divinity and confined him to the palace while the Shogun appropriated his power. The shogunate in Japan ended in 1866-67 with the Meiji restoration that brought the monarchy out from oblivion and anointed it with unlimited authority. The actual authority, however, passed down to the Japanese bourgeoisie. There was no bourgeoisie in Nepal in 1918, but the counter - poser between the Maharajdhiraj (King) and the Maharaja (Prime Minister) could never be missed. It was a definite suggestion of actual or latent conflict between the King and the Rana Prime Minister.

In the 1920s Pandit Dharnidhar^a Koirala's collection of poems 'Naivedya'¹⁹ was published from Banaras, it was refused entry into Nepal. In the same year another educational book on agriculture was published by Krishnalal Adhikari. The name of the book is Krishi Shikshavali, Prathambhag, Makai Ko Kheti.²⁰ In the preface of the book he wrote "we care more for the foreign dog, than for the -----"

19. Gupta, Anirudha, Politics in Nepal, p.24.

20. "Jaga Jaga Aba Jagajana Jaga,
Jaga Anati-Vishwa Aba Jaga,
Ghoro Nida Abato Parityaga,
Bhorbhaya Atisuta Jana Aba Jaga".
(quoted by Kumar Pradhan op.cit., p.77)
Awake Awake, Now Awake People of the World
Awake the Whole World,
Leave Your Deep Slumber,
It is Dawn, Awake All Sleeping People Now"
(Translated by me)

native one, but when it comes to guard ourselves against thieves and robbers, it is the native dog and not the foreign one, sleeping in the sofa, that proves more useful".²¹ This book led to the imprisonment of the author till his death.

Sambhu Prasad Dhungel (the Asukavi)²² (1899-1928) contributed a few verses to Makai ko Kheti, lost his job, tried to pacify the Rana (Chandra Shumsher) by singing his praise in a few compositions, earned his ire again by contributing poems to Gorkhali²³ (Published from Banaras by Sapkota) and had finally to die at Banaras in penury.

Another rebel literary figure was Bala Krishna Shumsher who left Nepal for Calcutta to learn about Indian politics and was known as Bala Krishna Soma.²⁴ He wrote "Oh my country, if it happened in Calcutta, my child would surely have been saved. The appalling condition of my motherland, in this very century, had murdered my son ... but this event had brought change in my life. Revolution began to smoulder

21. Ibid.

22. Quote in Mrs. V. Sharma, 'Role of Nepali language and literature in the integration and modernisation of Nepal.' (Modernisation of Nepal). pp-227-234.

23. Hutt, Michael James, op.cit., pp.138-140.

24. Hutt, Michael James, op.cit. pp.171 and also Pradhan, Parashmani, Bal Krishna Soma, p.1.

deep within my heart"

Meanwhile in Darjeeling socio-political activities had started. In 1907 a group of rich Nepalese and Bhutia landlords made a representation to the British Government demanding a separate administrative set-up for Darjeeling district, outside the scope of the Morley-Minto reforms. In 1917 the demand was reiterated.²⁵

On the other hand, the Gorkha Association formed in 1918 in Darjeeling seemed to be approaching the Indian nationalist movement. During the non-co-operation movement, Dal Bahadur Giri, earlier associated with the Gorkha Association, opened a branch of the Indian National Congress at Darjeeling. The non-co-operation movement spread to the tea plantation in hills under the leadership of Dal Bahadur Giri and Bhakta Bir Lama) popularly known as Asohojogi Lama,²⁶ In 1926 a Gorkha Association was formed in Calcutta to work for the social, economic and religious uplift of Nepal. Its President, Agan Singh, had been implicated in the non-cooperation movement. It raised a volunteer corps to prevent the abduction of Nepalese women to India. An

25. D.B. Gurung, 'Political Socialisation of the Indian Nepalese in the Early twentieth century', North Bengal University Review, vol.2, No.1, and 2, Special Issue on the Himalaya, Dec.1981.

26. Ibid.

expatriate C-class Rana, Thir Shamsheer, became its President in 1928. The Association was, however, short lived.²⁷

Beginning of the Political Movement in Nepal

The first world war agitated south Asia more than ever before. Nepal could not keep away from this tumult. Thousands of Gorkha soldiers were deployed all over the world by the British Government. After the war they came back and settled mostly in the Indian districts on the neighbourhood of Nepal like Darjeeling, Banaras and Dheradun. The first world war was a war against authoritarianism and medieval imperialism. The campaign was surcharged by liberal ideologies. Many Nepali soldiers were affected by the spirit of enlightenment and democracy. For obvious reasons, however, such spirit had no place in Nepal. They were spread among the Nepalese settlers in India who established social and cultural organisations. In 1918, a Gorkha Library was established at Kurseong in Darjeeling, and, in 1924, the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan was founded in the Darjeeling district.

All India Gorkha League

27. Majumdar, op.cit., p.27.

The All India Gorkha League was the first political organisation of the Nepalese settlers in India.²⁸ It was founded by educated Nepalese, mostly ex-armymen, some of whom had participated in the non-cooperation movement at Dehradun in 1921. In the first six years; however, it avoided taking part in politics. But in 1926, the League adopted a strong anti-British and anti-Muslim tone.²⁹ The second session of the League at Dehradun elected Thakur Chandan Singh as its President and asked for modernisation of Nepal by extensive reforms of the kind undertaken by Amir Amanullah Khan in Afganishtan and the thirteenth Dalai Lama in Tibet.³⁰ Resolutions were passed urging the Rana Government to lift the ban on foreign tour by the Nepalese. In 1927, a branch of the League was opened at Dibrugarh in Assam where a large Gorkha population had settled down.³¹

The most illustrious name associated with the foundation of ^{the} Gorkha League was that of Thakur Chandan

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid. pp.28-29.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

It appears that, in 1926, a branch of the Gorkha Association was formed in Calcutta too. The Association organised a volunteer corps to combat abduction of Nepalese women to India. (Haruhiro, Fukui, ed. Political Parties of Asia and The Pacific, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conecticut, 1985) vol.II, p.802.

Singh, a member of the Nepalese nobility and a soldier of distinction. Thakur Chandan Singh attended the 1921 Delhi session of All India Hindu Mahasabha and renounced his war decorations and Medals. Before that he had been in the Indian National Congress for a short period and took part in non-cooperation movement. He had also served the Maharaja of Bikaner as his assistant secretary. In 1922 he left Congress and, in 1926, edited a paper called Himalayan Times. Later he edited another paper, Tarun Gorkha, which was renamed as Gorkha Samsar, and it became the organ of the Gorkha League. Through its column Thakur Chandan Singh urged the Nepalese to take education, particularly technical and scientific knowledge. It had a moderately satisfactory circulation in 1927. But later it was banned in the Gorkha cantonments.³²

Another important name connected with the League was Bahadur Shumsher,³³ the son of Dev Shumsher who had been ousted from power as the Prime Minister by Chandra Shumsher in 1901.

The involvement of a section of Ranas with various protest movements from time to time suggests that factional

32. Ibid.p-28.

33. Ibid.

conflicts within the Nepalese political elite was in part responsible for the growth of political movements in Nepal. More important, however, was the role of the educated and intellectual Nepalese who were, on the one hand, suffering from economic insecurity and, on the other, sharing a vision of development of Nepal, side by side with India, with the Indian nationalist leadership.

Given the demography and the culture of Nepal, such political consciousness at the earlier stage partly tended to associate itself with Hindu Mahasabha and even oppose the muslim³⁴ and Christian interests. The Hindu Mahasabha also extended its patronage to the league and covered its activities in the papers like Sradhanand in Bombay, Keshri in Poone, Arjun in Delhi and Shrikrishna in Calcutta.³⁵

The Overzealous Indian Patriotism

The Indian nationalist interest in Nepal suffered from one drawback - lack of knowledge. In 1917, during World War I, Raja Mahendra Pratap, an Indian revolutionary living in exile at Kabul and calling himself "The head of the provisional Government of India", sent an emissary, named

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

Kala Singh, a member of the Ghadr Party, to Kathmandu.³⁶ He carried a letter from Bethman Hollwegg, the Chancellor of Germany, exhorting the king of Nepal to rise against the British. Mahendra Pratap, in his own letter to Chandra Shumsher, the Prime Minister, urged him to exploit the British difficulties during the war, political unrest in India, unrest among the frontier tribes and the Khilafat controversy. He warned Chandra Shumsher that the British would some day usurp Nepalese sovereignty as in the princely states of India, Egypt and Persia. He wanted Chandra Shumsher to support the Indian nationalist movement and promised him the premiership of an Independent Indian Republic of the future, besides territorial concession to Nepal. During his return from the unsuccessful mission in the guise of a cloth merchant, Kala Singh was caught by the British and later was hanged.³⁷ Chandra Shumsher remained convinced of the necessity of British rule in India and offered the British Indian Government assistance to restore law and order in Afghanisatn. Strict censorship on mails from India and Nepal was imposed. The critical difference between the King and the Rana Prime Minister was not noticed by Indians until quite late. The Rana Government nevertheless made use of the British difficultues,

36. Majumdar, Kanchanmoy, op.cit., p-6. and Sinha, L.P., Left Wing In India, p.68.

37. Anderson and Damle, Brotherhood in Saffron.p.40.

The agreement of 1923 between the British Government of India and the Government of Nepal, reasserting the Treaty of Segauli and acknowledging the sovereignty of Nepal opened up a new phase of politics in Nepal. One of the consequences was the growth of a certain kind of communal pride in British India. Shortly after this treaty the Hindu Mahasabha was organised as a political party by V.D. Savarkar.³⁸ Savarkar advocated the election of either the Maharaja or the Prime Minister of Nepal for the presidentship of the All India Hindu Sabha to be held at Calcutta in 1924.³⁹ Obviously, Savarkar was less familiar than enthusiastic about Nepal's politics for he did not know that the title of Maharaja belonged to the Prime Minister, while the Nepal king was known as Maharajadhiraj.

Savarkar probably meant the king or the Prime Minister. His brother Ganesh Savarkar wrote in 1925 that the idea was to invite either the king or the Prime Minister.⁴⁰ The idea did not materialise because of several factors. But one D.A. Dharmachariya came out with a letter stressing the point

38. See Ganesh Domodar Savarkar, "Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha Sanghach Tritiya Adhiveshan Ani Nepalachha Maharajanche Prastutanche Kartyava" in Hindu Sangathanatmak Nepali Andoloncha Upakram

39. See G.D. Savarkar, "The Nepal Movement" in Hindu Sangathanatmak Nepali Andoloncha Upakram.

40. Ibid.

that the Maharaja was the Prime Minister's title given by the virtue of his position, while the Prime Ministership is a qualification of an official post.⁴¹

Dharamachariya also objected to the address used by the Hindu Sabha convention of Bombay for the letter written to Maharaja Sir Chandra Shumsher Rana as "Ex-Prime Minister". Thus the writer went on stressing that Sir Chandra Shumsher was still in office and had done ~~his~~ splendid work as Prime Minister.⁴² The role of religious activities of India in Nepal's social and political movements had already been noticed in the Arya Samaj's mission. These religious zealots could never identify the contradiction between the Maharajadhiraj and the Maharaja of Nepal. The name of Dharamchariya is also mentioned as the leader of the All India Buddhist Movement, a socio-religious reform movement of India.⁴³

Another name that occurs in the British records of this period was that of Swami Vishuddhananda⁴⁴ He is described in the Indian police report as a disciple of Gandhi. He had -----

41. See D.A. Dharmachariya, "Appeal to the Hindu Sabha and the Nepal Maharaja" in G.D. Savarkar, op.cit.

42. Ibid.

43. Majumdar, Kanchannmoy, op.cit.p-25.

44. Ibid.

close connection with the Hillmen's Association of Darjeeling. He visited Nepal, but was prevented from visiting Tibet.

The Hindu Mahashabha's persisting interest in Nepal (particularly, the Rana Prime Minister) is reflected in an important delegation sent by it to the visiting Nepalese Prime Minister, Juddha Shumsher, in Jan 1935 at Hyderabad House, Delhi. The delegation was headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malavia^y and included Hindu Mahasabha stalwarts like Pandit Din Dayal Upadhyaya and Vai Parmanand, besides some Hindu Mahasabha members of the Central Assembly.⁴⁵

In Calcutta among the prominent non-official Indians to receive the Maharaja was Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. But the most important point about the Hindu Mahasabha's reception to the Maharaja was the address.

"While strictly adhering to the highest ideas of Pan-Indian Nationalism this Mahasabha is seeking to bring about Hindu Solidarity and Hindu well-being and, in our endeavours to preserve Hindu Culture, we hope to receive Your

45. Shaha Rishikesh - Modern Nepal, vol. II P - 118 and Prasad, Iswari - The Life of Maharaja Juddha Shumsher, p-136.

Highness's approbation and sympathy."⁴⁶

46. Shaha, op.cit., pp.125-126.