

## CHAPTER I

### The Life and Works of Laxmi Prasad Devkota

The Devkotas, who traced their descent from the Aryan family, Purbiya Brahmins, migrated from Kanauj, in India, to the South-west of Nepal, from where they moved to various places. Eventually, they came to Kathmandu after the unification of Nepal by the King Prithvi Narayan Shah. The poet's father, Til Madhav Devkota (1852-1936) was born at Bhotahity, from where he moved to Thatunati, which lies between Delhi Bazaar and Kamalpokhari in Kathmandu. He was first married to Tika Devi, who died after giving birth to two sons and three daughters, of whom only two daughters survived. After the death of his wife, he married Amar Rajya Lakshmi, by whom six sons and seven daughters were born to him.

Laxmi Prasad Devkota, the third son of Til Madhav Devkota and Amar Rajya Lakshmi Devi, was born on Kartik 27, 1966 V.S. (November 12, 1909 A.D.). There is a supernatural story about the birth of the future poet.

Til Madhav Devkota was very *sad* because of the death of the three children by his first wife, who also passed away. He was also not very happy when two sons, one of whom was a blockhead, and then five daughters were born one after another

by his second wife. He was naturally anxious to have another son<sup>1</sup>. He, therefore, worshipped "साँखुदेवी" ('a goddess at Sankhu'), and the birth of his third son fell on the day of Lakshmi Pūjā (the worshipping of the goddess of Lakshmi). Accordingly, the child was named Lakshmi<sup>2</sup> Prasad (the offering of Lakshmi).

The facts show that from the beginning of their time in the west of Nepal, the Devkotas were noted writers, poets, and teachers. Til Madhav Devkota followed suit. He taught Sanskrit and Nepali in the palaces of the Ranas. He was also a noted priest. It is said that he had a distinct taste for classical literature, music, and dance. He, therefore, composed "पद्मवायन स्तोत्र" ('Padmāyan eulogy') "चन्द्रमा स्तुति" (The hymn of praise of the moon), "गुरुस्तुति" (the hymn of praise of the teacher), "लक्ष्मी स्तोत्र" (the Lakshmi eulogy'), etc. Along with these he composed poems in Sanskrit. Amar Rajya Lakshmi committed to memory the devotional poems written by her husband. She was an ideal mother. Thus, the Aryan influence was discernible upon the future poet from the very beginning of his life. Moreover, after his learning the three R's, he was asked to

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1 Dr. Chudamani Bandhu, देवकोटा ('Devkota') (Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan, 2036 V.S.), p. 6.

2 The name of the poet is spelled as 'Laxmi', and not 'Lakshmi' as suggested by the poet himself.

copy his father's poems in both Sanskrit and Nepali, which, to the surprise of his father, he would exactly reproduce just by reading them once. That, his father thought, was really a manifestation of Sarasvati (the goddess of learning). According to the Hindu tradition, she is the goddess of wisdom and science, and Lakshmi, the goddess of love, beauty and prosperity. Those two goddesses are envious of each other, and do not assist the same person. Laxmi Prasad Devkota was, therefore, assisted by the former, but never by the latter.

Til Madhav Devkota wanted to give his sons Sanskrit education, but he was opposed both by his wife and the eldest son Lekhnath Devkota, who had been earning handsomely by giving private tuition after passing his matriculation examination from Calcutta University. Consequently, the boy, when he was ten, was admitted into the Durbar School, a noted school and the first English School established in Nepal. Laxmi Prasad Devkota's first appearance in class is vividly described by his life-long friend, Chandra Bahadur Shrestha:

It was in the same year that a Brahmin boy just under his teens, with long unkempt hair, and loose and clumsy garments, got admission in my class. He looked a bit gaunt and a bit tall for his age, and with shoes unknown to brush and polish. Although indifferently dressed, he had a pair of dreamy eyes,

lips beaming with a smile and a broad forehead. My first impression of Devkota was nothing short of a cold disdain and I could not but call the new comer an uncouth lad. What surprised me most and made me shameful (sic) was that he came at the top in the annual examination. Crest-fallen, with a sense of broken pride, I hung my head<sup>1</sup>.

The intelligent boy with the pair of dreaming eyes and a smiling face was very ambitious from the beginning of his life at school. His immediate ambition was to help his aging father and the overburdened eldest brother, who had to maintain the twentyfive-member family. Moreover, his mother and his maid servant would often encourage him to be an English-teacher like his eldest brother, and make money. He was, therefore, committed to English for the sake of earning. Later the poet expressed his experiences then in these words:

म नेपाली बोल्दैनथेँ, नेपाली बोल्नेसँग बोल्दैनथेँ, तर अंग्रेजी बोल्ने बाटामा भेटे गडगडाहठसँग उद्गारित हुन्थेँ । मलाई यस्तो लाग्थ्यो मानौँ नेपालीमा लबजै छैनन्, भावै व्यक्त हुँदैन, मानौँ नेपाली बिद्वानको भाषा नै होइन । नेपाली बोल्दा जिभो लट्पटिन्थ्यो, जसलाई मैले तेह्र वर्षको तालीममा पालिश लगाइसकेको थिएँ । म अंग्रेजीमा विचार गर्थेँ र अंग्रेजीमै बोल्दथेँ । नेपाली बोल्दा लाटोलाटो हुन्थेँ, अंग्रेजी बोल्दा मलाई प्रशंसाको नजरले मुख ताकथे । नेपाली बोले विद्यार्थीले मलाई हेपथे, अंग्रेजी भडभडास तिनका घमण्डका नाक भुइँमा जोतिन्थे, मलाई नेपालीको उन्नति

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1 My Reminiscence of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota,  
(Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1981), pp. 1-2.

कमरको श्रीमती शिक्षाको विस्तार नपुगेर भन्ने लाग्दथ्यो ।  
पण्डितहरू देहता "कसिस" बस्तो लाग्दथ्यो ; ज्यादै पुराना;  
आधुनिकताको उच्चाको नपुगेको कट्टर विज्ञान शून्य सङ्ग्रह र तर्क  
भारतीय मध्ययुगी सुशुभ्रिताई तिनका थाप्तामा मनमनै भन्थे.....

(I did not speak Nepali, I would not speak it with people who spoke Nepali. But I would pour out English to anyone I met in the street who spoke it. It seemed to me as though there were no words in Nepali, that feelings could not be expressed, as though Nepali were not a language of scholars. If I did speak Nepali, my tongue- which I had been polishing with thirteen years of education- got all mixed up. I used to think in English, speak only in English. While speaking Nepali it seemed, as if I were dumb; and everyone would praise me when I was speaking English. If I spoke Nepali, the students became insilent if I spoke English, I humiliated them... The pundits I saw as fossils, superannuated, unaware of the light of modernism; bigoted, narrow,

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1 लक्ष्मी निबन्ध संग्रह भा. १: (Lakshmi Essay Collection)  
(Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan, 2038 V.S.), p. 50.

and without learning, pouring out all that medieval Indian deep sleep over their heads<sup>1</sup>.

For that commitment to English, he worked very hard. He started learning while at school. He followed in the foot-steps of his eldest brother in giving private tuition. But he had to prepare for the school examination, the curriculum of which was quite challenging:

The founder of Durbar School, the first English High School of the country, was Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana. The sole objective of opening Durbar School was to keep a closer link with the Britishers. What was possible only through direct personal communication with the Britishers (sic). Hence to make his sons understand the English language, Durbar School was opened. As this school was designed after the schools of England, the courses of study were heavily loaded with standard books of English language. A certain design of education system was developed by Macaulay had been and introduced in British India in 1813 A.D. and the same design was copied in Nepal<sup>2</sup>.

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1 David Rubin's Translation with minor changes

2 Gopi Nath Sharma, School Curriculum in Nepal (Kathmandu: Hem Kumari, 1980), p. 1.

The passage throws light on how Devkota received standard education in English from the very outset of his student life. He also composed poems, both in Nepali and English, while at school. According to the Hindu tradition, marriage was a social necessity, and he was married to Mana Devi Chalise<sup>1</sup> before he had passed his matriculation examination. **However,** he finished his school education, normally a course of ten years, within five years, getting sometimes double promotions. He passed it in the first division from Patna University in 1926, one year after his marriage.

Laxmi Prasad Devkota got himself admitted into I.Sc. class at Tri-Chandra College. He also began to teach for ten to twelve hours a day. He spent time in literary activities too. He was, therefore, often irregular in attending his classes. After composing a poem, he always wanted to recite it to an audience - wherever he might be, at home, or at College.<sup>2</sup> Devkota found this time [the recess of half an hour] very convenient for reading out his poems. They [his fellow students] listened to his laudable efforts with high appreciation<sup>2</sup>. He passed his I.Sc. examination in the second

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1 Though her name was Mana Devi Chalise, her husband used to call her 'Bajei', and she, in return, would call him 'Bubāhaju' - both family pet names.

2 C.B. Shrestha, op. cit., p. 6.

division in 1928 from Patna University. Much more interested in art, he switched over to the B.A. Course, which he passed in the first division in 1930, he being the only one to pass from Nepal that year. As mentioned earlier, he had a surprisingly retentive memory. He could recall even long passages from Hazlitt, Coleridge, De Quincey, Bradley, Hudson, etc., as a result of which, he was once described as, 'the greatest parrot he [the professor] had ever come across in his life ...'<sup>1</sup> after he reexamined his answer-scripts on the complaint of the parents of the envious Rana students, who had difficulty even to get through.

In 1930 Laxmi Prasad Devkota and some of the young intellectuals in Kathmandu were fined 100 rupees each by the regressive Rana regime for putting their signatures to a proposal for opening a public library there. It aroused a lasting rebellious feeling in him against the feudal autocracy, for the first time. However, next year he was awarded a stipend for studying for the degree of bachelor of law at Patna University, which was conferred on him in 1934. On his return he was offered a government post, but he chose teaching in preference to holding it. Between 1934 and 1935 his parents died with a gap of a few months, and his second daughter also

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1 Dr. C. Bandhu, देवकोटा (Devkota), op. cit., p. 15.

passed away a few months after. These bereavements profoundly moved him. Moreover, his long cherished desire to do his M.A. in English remained unfulfilled - first, because his form of application was rejected<sup>1</sup> by Patna University, and subsequently because of his poor financial condition. In view of these grim facts, signs of mental disturbance were noticed in him.

In 1938 Laxmi Prasad Devkota with his brothers went to Gosainsthan, a hilly place to the north-west of Kathmandu for a change, where, for the first time, he saw Nature in its varied magnificent manifestations. He also saw the inhabitants were simple and honest, though stricken by poverty at its lowest level. He realized that despite appalling poverty they were happy. That divine beauty in Nature and the happiness of the people had a salutary influence on him. He not only recalled the experiences he had in an essay entitled 'पहाडी जीवन' (The Mountain Life) written afterwards, but also expressed them in some of his most popular poems such as मुना-मदन ('Munā and Madan'). On his return, there was no sign of improvement in his health. In the following year, he was, therefore, taken to the sanatorium at Ranchi, where he was

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1 S. Dhakal "महाकविने बितारका उत्पन्न शैक्षिक वर्षहरू" ('The years the Great Poet spent for Higher Education') in Indu, 1(9), Pans, 2036 V.S., p. 17.

under the treatment of Dr. Berkley Hill for four months. A perusal of the letters<sup>1</sup> concerning the illness during that period belonging to the Devkotas together with Mrigendra Shamshere and Brahma Shamshere, who had helped the poet financially to stay at Ranchi, does not throw much light on what had been wrong. The letters reveal that the poet used to smoke too much. He is, therefore, advised to give up smoking and to free himself from nervousness and melancholy. Eventually, the doctor made the comment that the poet should live away from the 'family' - meaning from his brothers. But he was advised to live with his wife. Later the poet referred to this event in the poem "पागल" ('Crazy'), and also expressed his experiences about the circumstances which led him to mental imbalance as follows:

तपाईंलाई थाहा छ म आर्थिक संकटमा थिएँ त्यससमय । मलाई लघुताभासको  
बोध हुन्थ्यो जताजतै । सन्सारमा सब भन्दा सानो प्राणी ठान्दथे म आफूलाई  
अरुलाई म पाहाड जस्तो देख्थे । मेरो इच्छा कतै पनि पूरा हुन्नथ्यो आर्थिक  
कारणले गर्दा । मेरो मनको बह कसैले बुझेन त्यस समय । म यस्तै चिन्तामा  
रुमतीले बस्थे चौबीसे घन्टा । त्यसै कारण त कुरे नबुझी उल्लुङ्गले सिल्ली  
भनेर डोस्याएर हिँडे राँधीतिर मलाई । मलाई त आर्थिक रोग लागेको थियो ।  
डाक्टरले के गर्न सक्थ्यो र ? तै पनि बाँसिदिने डा. बर्कीले हिलेको रेखदेखमा  
अरुको छिट्टै बुझाउन केही महीना । उसैले मेरो रोगको पत्ता लगायो र भन्यो-

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1 See J.L. Sharma, महाकवि देवकोटा: एक व्यक्तित्व दुई रचना ('Great Poet Devkota: One personality, two compositions') (Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan, 2002 V.S.), pp. 71-102.

"जोग्राफिकल मिस्टेक । पश्चिमा जन्मनु पर्ने पूर्वमा जन्मेछ ।" सायद उसको भनाइ थियो होला -" पश्चिमा भए उसलाई आर्थिक संकट हुने थिएन, पूर्वमा आर्थिक बोझले कि थियो ।" तैपनि उत्तम प्रयत्न गर्नु, भैरो "जन्मजात रोग" निको भएन .....१

(You know that I was in financial trouble at that time. Everywhere the awareness of my insignificance struck me. I considered myself the smallest creature in the world. I saw others as mountains. For financial reasons I found it impossible to satisfy any of my wishes. Nobody understood my mental anguish at this time. I would sit for the whole day engaged in such thoughts. Because of this, the idiots, not understanding what was wrong, thinking me crazy, hauled me off to Ranchi. But I was suffering from an economic disease. What could a doctor do? Nevertheless, I remained in Dr. Berkley Hill's care for a few months to satisfy them. He understood my illness and said, "It's a geographical mistake ! You should have been born in the West and you were born in the East". Perhaps his meaning was "If you were in the West you wouldn't be suffering financial distress while in the

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1 Quoted by J.L. Sharma, ibid., pp. 25-6.

East you are afflicted with economic burdens. Though he tried, my "congenital illness" did not improve! The passage clearly explains that the cause of his illness was financial distress. In another instance, he recalled his financial crisis more pathetically in these words:

छोरा छोरी छु मेरो बहान अति राम्रो व्यवस्था मिलाउन नसकने..... कहिलेकहि  
त केटाकेटीलाई सन्तोष दिन चामलमा दुटो ल्पेक् मिलाई मात्रा धेरै पार्नु पर्छ्यो....  
आर्थिक दृष्टिले मर्दा मेरो मन साहि विचिन्तत हुन्थ्यो, त्यसैले कति कुरा भिन्नै,  
कम बोल्थे । मलाई । अर्थ - पात्र भन्न तामे ।<sup>1</sup>

( I had many children. My wife did not know how to manage the household well ..... Sometimes to allay the hunger of the children, we had to add husk to the rice to increase the quantity. Because of the financial distress, I was very much depressed. I used to forget many things; I used to speak very little.....People began to say I was half mad.)

The Devkota brothers separated from the joint family, and Laxmi Prasad Devkota moved to a newly purchased house named 'Kavi-Kanja' ('the poet's bower') at Maiti Devi in 1941. In 1943 he was employed as a writer by the नेपाली भाषा-  
संघ ( the 'Nepali Translation Association').<sup>2</sup> It was not a

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1 David Rabin's translation.

2 Ram Baba, "देवकोटाताई संझदा" ('While Remembering Devkota' in B, 8 (12), Falgun, 2025 V.S., pp. 162-63.)

permanent job and he was appointed to a post of professor of English and Nepali at the Tri-Chandra College in 1946. The forties were the most active years of his career - he wrote; he associated with literary magazines, and other social organizations. His poems and articles got priority in the first issues of the magazines such as Sarada and Sāhitya-Srot; in the latter his "स्वप्न विश्लेषण" ('The Interpretation of the Dream', a rendering of Freud's) was published. But he was not satisfied with what he had been doing from within the country against the feudal autocracy. He, therefore, quitted his professorship and secretly proceeded to Benares [India], leaving behind his helpless wife and children - one of his sons suffering from typhoid - to join the Nepali Congress in 1949. There was a thorough investigation in his house by the police and all his rooms were locked after snatching away the works written by him. His son died in a very miserable condition, because no neighbours ventured, not to speak of any help, even to remove the corpse to the burning ghat for fear of police atrocities.

Laxmi Prasad Devkota was very active in India, participating in various political and social movement and also editing the युगवाणी ('Yugawānī'), a revolutionary magazine. He wrote stories, poems, books, and booklets, breathing fire against the Rana autocracy<sup>1</sup>. After a few

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1 See Dr. Iswar Baral "नेपाली कथा साहित्यको विश्लेषण" (On the Nepalese story literature) in सामाजिक समीक्षण (The common Criticism) (Kathmandu: Sajha Publication, 2034 V.S.), p. 331.

months, his wife joined him, and again he had to face the never-ending financial problem, by selling his poems to a publisher. The rate of his poems was regularly reduced by his publisher but he would write at a breakneck speed to maintain his family<sup>1</sup>. Owing to hard work and under-nourishment, he fell sick and was at the point of death. His wife, therefore forced him to return to Nepal relying on the clemency of the Ranas, which was possible through the good offices of Narendra Mani Dikshit, once his teacher, and then Foreign Secretary. On his return, he was, naturally, in increasing financial trouble, because of his anti-government activities in India. Even after the Revolution (1950), his economic condition did not improve, owing to his return through clemency just a few months before it. Moreover, he widened his activities in the liberal atmosphere of the country, associating himself with literary and social organizations. The result was that he had no time to revise what he wrote.

The mid-fifties were the most important years for Laxmi Prasad Devkota, when he attended literary and cultural international conferences. In 1954 he went to Rumania to participate in the World Youth Conference, after which he

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1 Ibid.

visited some European countries, including Russia, and China, where he spent about one month seeing the common man's life there - especially the commune life. After that visit, his writings dealt with the day to day problems of the common man, and he was even called a communist; but the poet said to Dom Moraes a few days before his death that the critics called him a communist just because he had visited the communist countries. He reminded his visitor that he was only a poet<sup>1</sup>. In 1955 he was appointed a member of the Advisory Council by the King, and he was elected as the leader of the opposition; and in 1957 he led the Nepalese delegation to the Asian writers' Conference in Delhi, after which he travelled in different parts of India as the guest of the Indian Government. Next year he became Minister of Education and Local self-government for a short period. He was also appointed President of the Nepal Academy and a member of the Tribhuvan University Commission. His contributions to all these organizations are highly commendable.

The condition of his health was deteriorating fast. He was, therefore, taken to Calcutta for a medical check-up; and underwent a major operation for cancer at the S.S.K.H. Hospital in 1958. After a few months, he received an invitation to

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1 Dom Moraes, Gone Away - An Indian Journal (London: Heinemann, 1960), p. 148.

participate as a leader of the Nepalese Delegation in the Second Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Tashkent. His wife, obviously for reasons of his health, also accompanied him. His address to the Conference was much appreciated, and he also gave a long interview to the press reporters; but he did not feel well, and went to Moscow for treatment. He stayed there for about four weeks. According to his wife, he wrote some poems at the hospital there, and they were published in the Russian. Of these "पोतारो" (A platform, erected usually under the trees by the side of the road) became very popular in that country. By selling his poems, the poet returned home with gifts for his relatives.

On his return he found that his salary was not being released by the Royal Nepal Academy. In fact it was released only after eight months. No official clarification was given for withholding it; but, according to the people associated with the event, the poet's leave to participate in the Tashkent Conference was not officially granted. It is also said that the Royal Nepal Academy had made a condition that the poet should apologize for going without permission, which the poet never did, though he had to face the severest financial crisis in the last year of his life.

The death of the 'Mahakavi' (the great poet) was fast approaching. He was taken to Calcutta for the second time. His condition was extremely grave, so much so that no surgery

was advised. He expressed his desire to die in Nepal, and, therefore, he was again taken to his homeland. His never-ending financial crisis worsened, because of the increasing expenses for his treatment, which was paid by contributions from the late King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah, from the members of the royal family along with donations raised by students and various organizations as well.

The poet was under the care of Dr. Miller of the Mission Hospital, popularly known as Shanta Bhavan Hospital, in Kathmandu. Later Dr. Miller said that the poet wanted to become a Christian; but several tape-recorded conversations at that hospital revealed that he only appreciated the service rendered to humanity by the missionaries; but did not express his desire of becoming a convert to Christianity<sup>1</sup>. He wrote some poems, including 'Promethean Pain I bear' and "म शून्यमा शून्य तरी विचारें" (I, a nothing, dissolve into Noting'), both in English and Nepali. In them he expressed the view that it was his misfortune that he did not faithfully seek God before. He, therefore, expressed his anguish in these words - "आदिश्री प्रीति रहेछ एका न भित्त भो, ज्ञान न भो विवेका" i.e. 'I learned that Krishna was the only one, (but) I did not become his devotee, nor find wisdom or knowledge'<sup>2</sup>. Many visitors came to see him at the hospital; and he would ask of them to give him potassium

1 See David Rubin Nepali Visions Nepali Dreams: The Poetry of Laxmi Prasad Devkota (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 15.

2 David Rubin's translation.

cyanide so that he could end his suffering. The poet knew that his death would take place very shortly. He, therefore, thanked to all who had helped him financially and otherwise.

It is the practice in the East that the dying person is taken to the bank of a river, where he breathes his last in peace. Devkota, therefore, was taken to the holy river Bagmati, by the side of the Temple of Lord Shiva i.e. Pashupatinath Mandir. One or two days before his death, Ved Mehta and Dom Moraes met him there. The poet asked Moraes to recite some of his poems for him. After listening to him, the dying poet said, 'I was always more mechanical ... too professional ... there was so little time'<sup>1</sup>. Before his death, he asked his weeping wife if she had enough money for his cremation. She said that she had some. Then the end came on September 14, 1959.

Before concluding this brief survey of his life, it would not be out of place to recall only two from among so many condolence messages from within the country and abroad.

The poet Laureate Lekhnath said :

त्यत्रो महान् विभूति क्विदं क्विदं आउउ, क्विदं हतपत्त पाइने हो र, पाँच  
सय बर्षमा पनि कुन्नि..... ... i.e. 'Such

a great genius very rarely comes; we cannot get such a one soon; I doubt if we can get [such genius] even within five hundred years'.

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1 Dom Moraes, op. cit., p.148

The following condolence is from his fellow-poet, Madhav Prasad Ghimire : बाटो भूलेर धरतीतिर आएको त्यो देवदुतले ज्वालामा उभिएर फुलका गीत गायो। i.e. by forgetting the way to heaven, the angel flew towards the earth, and sang the songs of the flowers by standing in the flames'. After his death, a debate on the religious faith the poet believed in started among the critics. Of them, the traditional ones said that the poet's expression that "आखिर श्रीकृष्णा रहे छ एक । न भक्ति भो ज्ञान, न भो विवेक।" I learned that Krishna was the only one, (but) I did not become his devotee, nor find wisdom or knowledge' proved that he believed in Hinduism on his death bed. But the progressive ones would argue that that was expressed in delirium, and it had no meaning. In this context it should be remembered that the poet had been always above the religious sects. In the real sense, he was a truly ideal humanist, and died as such.

After this the discussion of his works will follow: ✓  
It is very difficult to find all the works of Laxmi Prasad Devkota, because his acquaintances, taking advantage of his simplicity and carelessness, took some of them for personal ends. Moreover, some of the works he wrote for नेपाली भाषानुवाद परिषद (The Nepali Translation Association) and नेपाली भाषा प्रकाशनी समिति (The Nepali Language Publishing Committee) are being published even these days; and no one knows how many of them have been lost or stolen after so many years. At this point it should also be noted that his wife would snatch away his poems and burn them since they did not bring her any money

then<sup>1</sup>.

Regarding the first poem written by the poet, there is no unanimity of view. Some say the following is the first one written when he was just ten:

धन घोर दुःख सागर संसार जान भाई  
न गरे घमण्ड कीहने मनुछ हामीलाई

(Know the world to be a sea of deep sorrow, brother, be not proud - we must go.)<sup>2</sup>

प्रहरी (Prahari, tri-mensual) made a slight modification of the above, and said that that was the first poem<sup>3</sup>. But the poet himself has said nothing about those poems. Instead, he said that he was first inspired to write a poem by his eldest brother's first wife, who had no issue of her own, and her husband had married a second wife. Though the poet had forgotten the whole poem, according to him, he remembered the first line of it, which was "म त अभागिनी पो भरे" i.e. 'I became very unfortunate'<sup>4</sup>. In this regard it should be

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- 1 See Shankar Lamichhane "नेपालका महाकविसेग भेट" (Meeting the Great Poet of Nepal) in Pr 1(3), Bhadra-Aswin, 2010 V.S., pp. 156-167.
  - 2 David Rubin's translation.
  - 3 See Nitya Raj Pandey महाकवि देवकोटा (The Great Poet Devkota) (Lalitpur: Madan Puraskar Guthi, 2016 V.S.), p. 6.
  - 4 Laxmi Prasad Devkota, "कवि हुने धुनमा" (Endeavouring to be a Poet) rpt. in B, 5(12), Falgun, 2025 V.S., p. 83.

remembered that the former has the tone of his aging father, and it seems difficult to imagine that the poet, at the age of ten, should have composed it. The latter, it seems, expresses the agony of a childless woman. Anyway, the fact is this that Devkota was a born poet, and began writing poems since the time he was admitted into Durbar School.

After this brief survey regarding the first work of the poet, the works which were published will be described in the sequential order of publication. First, the piece works, including poems, essays, and stories published in different magazines, will be dealt with; and the books will follow them. The names of the magazines which published the works are given after the English version in parenthesis followed by the year of publication. The year of publication is adopted after Kumar Bahadur Joshi's देवकोटा र उनका महाकाव्य ('Devkota and his Epics', 2031 V.S.)

"पूर्णिमाको जलधि" (Ocean of the full Moon<sup>1</sup>, Gorkhanatra, Kartik 15, 1991 V.S.) is Laxmi Prasad Devkota's first published poem. The poet gives an expression to his happiness at seeing the full moon. The poet used Sanskritized diction along with some Hindi words. Musicality is achieved by the use of alliteration, internal rhymes, and repetitions.

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1 See the text in Nityaraj Pandey, महाकवि देवकोटा (The Great Poet Devkota), op. cit., p. 12.

The simplicity of language and syntax found in the poems which followed it, does not mark this poem, though the poet's emotion on seeing the shining moon is noticeable.

"संज्ञना" ('Memory', Ś, 2(4), 1992 V.S.) is modelled on the English 'sonnet' form. Reality has become a burden of sorrow, and in his memory a flowering garden is implanted. In that garden a cuckoo is singing a sweet vernal song. Escapism, and flying to a beautiful seclusion, two distinct Romantic tendencies, are discernible in this poem.

"वृक्ष" ('The Tree', Ś, 2(6), 1993 V.S.) is modelled on a Sanskrit metre with nineteen syllables in a quarter, and four quarters in a stanza i.e. Śārdulabikrīḍita Chanda. The tree is personified. The poet speaks with it in a wordless language. He has raised it to the status of man. The seed, in which the tree lay implicitly, grew like human being, and is described as a source of eternal creation.

"आषाढको पन्ना" (The Fifteenth of Āṣāḍh, Ś, 2(9) 1993) is the first published essay written by Devkota, in which he described his visit to a paddy planting festival. The peasants were working, and happily singing in the rain. A folk song sung by them is given in the essay, which seems emotional enough suggesting that it should have been more like a poem by the poet himself:

"रोपाईको देला, बिजुली चम्क्यो, झरीले गीत गायो,  
बादलको तल खोला हे उफन्च्यो दिल मेरो नचायो  
आजको सुमी यो हिने बुट्टा घोलीमा छिपेको,  
आज र हाँस्यो आज र गायो ।  
भोली ता कठै ! को रुन्छ देखी कालले टिपेको !

('Planting time - lightning flashes - showers sing a song :  
The River leaps beneath the clouds, making my heart dance;  
To-day my blouse is decorated with the fancy embroidery of  
mud. Laughter to-day and singing to-day -  
Alas for tomorrow ! Who weeps if death harvests us<sup>2</sup> !

The song indicates that 'emotion' as opposed to 'thought'  
is dominating it. This, of course, is one of the common ten-  
dencies of the Romantic poets. This is the aesthetics which  
Devkota believed in, and the same is explicitly explained in  
the essay.

"घाँसी" ('The Grass-Cutter', *S*, 4(6-7), 1995 V.S.) is  
modelled on *Matric Shanda* (the metre regulated by the number  
of syllabic instants). The poem is a tribute to the first poet

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1 लक्ष्मी निबन्ध संग्रह (Lakshmi Essay Collection) (op.cit., p. 81.

2 David Rubin's translation with minor changes.

of the Nepalese literature, Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, who was inspired to translate The Ramayana by a grass-mower. The high ideal of the common man is described, and the first poet is regarded as the planet Venus in the Nepalese literary sky.<sup>1</sup>

It will not be out of place to point out the criticism of one of the tributes paid to Bhanu Bhakta Acharya by poet Dharanidhar Koirala in his poem "कवि भानुभक्त प्रति" (To Poet Bhanu Bhakta'), and Devkota's rejection of that criticism later. It was written by Ram Krishna Sharman from Darjeeling, and argued that Koirala's work was an imitation of William Wordsworth's 'London 1802'<sup>1</sup> in which a tribute to Milton was paid. The critic said, "अंग्रेजी साहित्यका वर्डस्वर्थले मिल्टनलाई 'तिमी आज जीवित भए केा हुन्थ्यो' भनेर संबोधन गरेको अनुकरणमा हात्ता छिण्डतण्डुले पनि भानुभक्तलाई 'आउ प्रवेश गर कोइ शरीर मलाई, भानु स्वल्प भइ मार्म वताउ यलाई' भन्दै बोलाउन लागे ।"<sup>2</sup>

i.e. 'Imitating the tribute of Wordsworth of English literature to Milton - Milton thou shouldst be living at this

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1. Thomas Hutchinson, ed. Wordsworth Poetical Works (Great Britain: OUP, 1981), p. 244.
  2. "अंग्रेजी साहित्यको प्रभाव" ('The Influence of English Literature') in सप्त-शारदीय (Sapta Saradiya), rpt. (Kathmandu: Saja Prakashan, 2035 V.S.), p. 17.

hour' our Panditji [Dharamidhar Keirala] began to call  
Khamu Bhakta by calling, 'Come and enter into someone, show  
us the way by being the Khamu-form [also the form of the sun]'.  
Devkota on his part rejected this criticism by saying, '...  
वर्डस्वर्थी मिल्टनलाई सम्बोधन गरेको तवरले के कुनै कविने अर्को कुनै महान कविलाई  
सम्बोधन गर्ने हुदैन ? उच्च, उदार आदर्शको आत्मालाई देखेर पदेर कविको हृदयबाट  
पुनराह्वानको उद्गार हुनु के अप्रकृत हो ? तब हाम्रा वेचारा पीडितजी धरणीधरलाई  
के को दोष ? पढेका थिए उस्तै प्रकृत उद्गार नेपाली रंग, टंग, छन्द, लवण, चित्र,  
भावना भानुभक्तको उपर निस्के छ । के यो अनुकरण भयो ?'

i.e. 'Is it forbidden to address a great poet as Wordsworth  
did Milton? Is it unnatural, by reading or by seeing a high  
liberal soul, on the part of a poet's heart to recall him?  
What, there in that, is the fault of our helpless Panditji  
Dharamidhar? He had read it, and the same natural expression,  
in Nepali colour, manner, metre, phrase, picture, and idiom,  
came out as Khamu Bhakta. Is it an imitation?' Three years  
after his rejoinder, Devkota wrote an essay on Khamu Bhakta  
Ashaya, and referred to the criticism mentioned here in these  
words - "मिल्टनलाई वर्डस्वर्थी बोलार्थ डै धरणीधरकोइतनाको आत्मार्थ  
मिलेर हामीहरू आजकलको युगमा उनको आह्वान गर्न चाहन्छौं ।"

1 "अंग्रेजी साहित्यको प्रभाव" ('The Influence of English') 2,  
S(2), 1999 V.S., p. 188.

i.e. 'As wordsworth had called Milton, we, in this day, want to recall him [Bhanu Bhakta Acharya] by uniting with the soul of Dharanidhar Koirala'. Thus, the implications of these excerpts is this that Devkota was in favour of adopting the forms and contents of English literature in Nepalese. This will again be referred to in the following chapters.

"पूर्व र पश्चिम" ('The East and the west') Ś, d(11), 1996 is the allegorical dialogue between an old man, representing the East, and a young one, the west. There is satire on the artificiality in life; and the poet's ideas on God, Life, and duty are also expressed.

"उको मने" ('Her little Goat', Ś, 1966) is the first story published by Devkota. The child psychology on the killing of her pet goat in the Durga Pooja festival has been skilfully expressed.

"जीवन" ('Life', Ś, 5(2) 1966) has eight rhythmic stanzas. The poet has described life from childhood to death with particular characteristics in childhood, youth and old age. He wonders at human aspirations and sorrows, and says "विषय नै उस् हे जीवन" , i.e. on life ! You are a wonder.

"जीवन-वन" ('Life-forest', Ś, 5(5), 1997 V.S.) is composed in Varanik Chandra with twenty one syllables in a quarter, i.e. Bragdhara Chanda. Of the four stanzas, the last one is bound in Mandākrānta Chanda. The theme of the poem is 'माया'

('illusion'). The idea is that it deceives us in our duty to God, who dwells in our family. The message is that happiness is the offspring of duty spent to satisfy the wants of the needy.

"वन" ('Forest', 3, 6(5), 1997) is composed in rhythmic couplets. This is one of the most philosophic poems written by Devkota. Illusion, wealth, crown, power, devotion, suffering, doubt, etc., are personified, and they, while talking with the poet, try to lead him astray from his chosen path of humanitarianism. But the poet is firm, and concludes by saying

"विश्व सबे घर हृदय-पुरीतिर न्याउंछु सेवा सन्देश", 'I bring the message of service to all the heart-cities in all the houses of the world'. But the poet weeps, since there is so little time to perform that duty.

"गाइने गीत" ('The Song of the Begging Singer', Sajha Publication 2024 V.S.), a collection of thirty songs, must have been written long ago, because some of them were published as early as 2001 V.S. The poet expressed his romantic sensibilities by selecting themes, such as the rising sun, the wish of the imagination, poetry, the dew-drop, the seed, the full moon, the misty morning, a flower, evening, sleep, the field of flowering stars, paddy, a river, my child, etc. The poet identified himself with the singer who is conceived as the universal poet. Imaginatively heightened feelings are expressed in each song. Both optimism and pessimism experienced by the

poet are mingled in the songs, such as "हजार मरण, हजार जीवन" ('Thousand Deaths and Thousand Lives') and "गाउँ गाउँ जाग्यो" (I like Singing).

"नव भाषोद्गार" ('Nine/New Language Expression', Ś, 2002 V.S.) is a eulogy on the accession of Padma Shanshere. As the title suggests, it is in nine languages, such as Sanskrit, Nepali, Hindi, Newari, Bengali, Urdu, English, French, and German, with all of which Devkota seems to be thoroughly familiar.

साँढे ('An Uncastrated Bull at Liberty', Ś, 12(11-12), 2003) is one of the most popular poems written by the poet. It is a satire in poetic prose on the repressive Rana autocracy. The poem was written on the Nietzschean theory of power. The poet severely criticised the Rana Prime Minister identifying him with the bull, which is out of control and resting in the middle of the road blocking the easy walking of travellers. The twin currents of pessimism and revolt have sweeping movement in it. It should be noted that the poet expressed his feelings overtly, since he was in a government post at the time.

"भाँचुँ कि मेरो कलम ?" ('Should I break my Pen into Pieces?' Ś, 13(2), 2004) expresses pessimism, which the poet experienced because of the suffocating circumstances in the country. He was moved by the suffering caused by the two World Wars as well. Moreover, the situation in Nepal was very

depressing. Living in such condition, he realized a dilemma - should he go on writing false poetry with his contemporaries against his inner voice, or should he be true to it? He knew what he should have written, but he had to pretend not to know the real task he should have done for his country. Moreover, he realized that all of his contemporaries were writing false poetry, since no one could express one's true feelings in the tyrannical autocracy. He expressed his feelings in these words:

यो फटाहा झुटो आत्मा  
केवलं कलम लिखामा करमा  
तीन कालतक साछी राखी  
छोडदछ आफ्नो छल ।<sup>१</sup>

(This prattler, false soul,  
Only by taking a pen in hand  
Keeping witness upto the three periods,  
Leaves its deceit.)

His tone in the poem is both satiric and rebellious. After writing this poem, he exiled himself to India to join the revolutionaries fighting against the Rana rule.

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1 Quoted by Dr. C. Bandhu देवकोटा ('Devkota'),  
op. cit., p. 183.

"डाइमन कुकुर" ('Dymond', a dog) is one of the many stories, such as "राजा कसरी गर्छन् राज ?" ('How does a King Rule?'), "नपुंसक प्रजा" ('Eunuch Subjects'), etc. published in युगवाणी, Yugavānī, of which Devkota was one of the editors. The role of Yugavānī in reawakening Nepalese society had been very noticeable. In all these stories, Devkota attacked the immoral life of the Ranas ruthlessly. In this particular one, the hypocritical life of Daulat Bahadur Shonashahi in the company of his concubine is depicted. His hypocrisy is blindly supported by Pandit Pindaudev, the heretic priest of Shonashahi. Devkota skilfully suggested that the distorted complexion of the offspring of the Ranas showed that they did not maintain the purity in their genes. The dog, supposed to be inferior to a cat in Hindu society, was really the first to taste the drink brought for Shonashahi. Thus, he left no stone unturned to attack the ruling class, since he had been exiled to India just for that.

"आँसु" (Tear) 2006 V.S. (written), consisting of ninety three stanzas, was written when the poet lived in India. It is said that he was staying in Benares and some Nepalese students in Calcutta invited him to go there in 1948. On his arrival, Devendraraaj Sharma requested him to write a poem on a tear like that of the Hindi poet Jaya Shankar Prasad<sup>1</sup>.

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1 Dr. C. Bhandu, देवकोटी (Devkota), op. cit., pp. 291-92.

Then and there , Devkota dictated the poem, the last stanza of which runs like this:

रुन्नु मलाई अब रुन देउ  
गुस्का भयो अब उरको तार ।  
मरुमा चलदा धुली मिल्दा  
झुक झुक भन्थे दिलका तार<sup>1</sup>

(I weep now, let me do so,

The essence of the breast dried up;

While walking on the sands, and getting dust,

The strings of heart would say 'bow down, bow down'.)

This explains the bitter experience of his financial crisis, among others, while he was with the revolutionaries there.

After this he was also asked to write on Mahatma Gandhi's death. He dictated fifty two sonnets on it. This is an instance. of his being a poet extempore.

'Sonnets' (Blitz, 31 Sravan, 2006 V.S.), as mentioned above, Devkota wrote fifty two sonnets in English on the occasion of the death of Mahatma Gandhi, two of which were published in Blitz. He sang the glory of the Mahatma and paid his sincere homage to him:

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1 Quote d *ibid*.

Socratic beauty in a fatherly face,  
It is the charm of soul we ever admire,  
The beauty of the spirit full of fire,  
The words all golden, and the voice all grace,  
Mahatma, Truth is Krishna, soul enchants,  
It is an omnipotent charm for all,  
The soul's last voice ...<sup>1</sup>

"झंजावीर" (The violent Wind Storm, Esh 2(S), 2007 V.S.) is one of the noted poems in the form of poetic-prose written by Devkota on the violent aspect of Nature. He saw the storm as both creative and destructive, like those in Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. On similar themes, he had already written "वादल" (The Cloud, 1997 V.S.) and he again wrote "झंजापति" ('To the Storm', 2013 V.S.), and "हुरीको गीत" (The Song of the Storm, 2013 V.S.). In all these poems he associated his feelings of rebellion and creation with the different forms of wind. This particular poem was written when he was in Benaras with the revolutionaries struggling against the Rana Regime, and is, therefore, very revolutionary in spirit. The critics showed thematic and emotional parallelism between these poems and Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. Of these, some even said that the Nepalese poet imitated or translated Shelley. Such remarks seem to be hasty, and have no

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1 'Bepuji' rpt. in Vasudha, 13(2) Jan-Feb, 1969, p. 30.

solid basis. This will be detailed in the subsequent chapters.

"भुत्लाई इटारो" (Throwing a stick at a Ghost, I, 1(1), 2013), a satire in verse, is regarded as the first personal satire in the history of Nepalese poetic literature. This will be dealt with in Chapter VI while comparing the works of Devkota with those of Lord Byron.

"गधा बोल्छ" ('The Donkey Speaks', I, 1(2) 2013) is one of Devkota's popular poems. The donkey is well-known for its tolerance, ignorance, and rather dirty nature. It is treated of by some of the British poets, such as G.K.Chesterton, S.T. Coleridge, etc. Devkota, through this ignorant animal, criticizes the animality in the civilized human beings. This will again be dealt with in Chapter VI.

"बाढीकी विष्णुमती" (The Flooded Bishnumati, I, 1(5) 2013) is a poem in which the poet expressed his progressive and reformative ideas about the Nepalese people.

"नयाँ सत्य-काल-संवाद" (The Conversation between the new Golden-age and the Iron-age, II, 1(6), 2018 V.S.) is a poem consisting fifty eight stanzas. Written in Vasantatilaka Chanda i.e. fourteen syllables in a quarter, the poem reminds the readers of the "सत्य-काल-संवाद" (The Conversation between the Golden age and the Iron age), which had been written by the poet Laureate Lekhnath Poudyal, who had glorified the golden age, whereas Devkota glorifies the iron age. Therefore,

the adjective 'नयाँ' [the new] is highly suggestive.

These are some of the most important pieces of Laxmi Prasad Devkota. There are others, such as 'To God', 'Promethean Pain I Bear', 'Life is the richest Feast for Man born here' written in English, and "रातकी आत्मा-प्रति" (To the Soul of the Night), "गौरैया र देवकोटा" (the Sparrow and Devkota, "संकल्प हाम्रो फूलोस" (Let our Resolution be Blooming), etc. written mostly at the Mission Hospital.

After the description of the pieces what of the books will follow in order of publication.

"सावित्री - सत्यवान" (Savitri and Satyavan, 1997 V.S., rpt. 2009 and 2024 V.S.) is a drama based on a Puranic legend. The chief actress (नटी) and the stage-manager (सूत्रधार) who are assigned dominating roles in the classical drama, are given no parts in it. In this sense, Devkota's attempt is new, though the credit for writing drama in a new form goes to Bal Krishna Shamsheer. It was written long before its publication<sup>1</sup>. The story, in a nut-shell, is as follows:

Savitri, the daughter of the King Ashvapati, married Satyavan, the son of the exiled King Dyumatsen against her father's will; and to her knowledge that her husband would die within a year. His death occurred as destined, and 'यज्ञराज'

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1 See Dr. G. Bandhu देवकोटा ('Devkota'), op.cit., p. 80.

(the god of death) came to take him. Instead, he had to give him back to Sāvitrī due to her pure love. This is, thus, an idealization of, and triumph of, love over death. The use of rhymeless Anuṣṭup Chanda - metres with eight syllables in a quarter, along with that of monologues gives the drama a tinge of modern style, which had already been used by Bala Krishna Shanshere.

"राजकुमार प्रभाकर" ('Prince Prabhākar', 1997 V.S., rpt. 2024 V.S.), a shorter poem, deals with a supernatural theme. Prabhakar, the scholarly prince of Mathurabati, is fond of travelling and hunting. One day he went out hunting against the will of his parents, and saw a young lady weeping in the midst of a garden in a forest. She attracted him, and created a beautiful and well-decorated palace in a city. Learning was prohibited there. Moreover, if the lady shed a tear, the city with its decorations would be reduced to ashes. However, the prince wanted to study even though he was asked not to do so. On her resentment, he used some abusive words to her. There was natural calamity, and everything disappeared.

Though there are many stories of witchcraft in Hindu mythology and religion, this shorter poem has thematic and situational parallelism to Keats's Lamia, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's Rappaccini's Daughter<sup>1</sup>.

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1 See N.A. Anderson, 'Rappaccini's Daughter: A Keatsian Analogue' in PMLA, XXXIII(II), May, 1968, pp. 273-75.

"प्रसिद्ध प्रबन्ध संग्रह" ('The Collection of noted Essays, 1998 V.S., rpt., 2013 V.S. and 2025 V.S.) is a collection of essays written by British essayists, which were translated by Devkota when he was employed as a writer at नेपाली भाषानुवाद परिषद (the Nepali Language Translation Association). It consists thirteen essays written by noted British essayists, such as Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, Joseph Addison, Coleridge, etc. It is a proof that Devkota had an excellent command of English, and had a noticeable skill in translating.

'Big Game Shooting in Nepal' (1999 V.S.) is a report of the joint hunting by the Viceroy of British India and the Prime Minister Juddha Shamshe. The shooting expedition took place in the Terai in Nepal, and its report was written by E.A. Smith and Devkota, though, later, Devkota's name appeared as a translator<sup>1</sup>.

"लक्ष्मी निबन्ध संग्रह" (A collection of Lakshmi Essays, 2002 V.S., rpt. 2020 V.S., 2036 V.S.) consists of thirty seven essays. They were written immediately after Laxmi Prasad Devkota had finished his education. It should be noted that Devkota had a profound knowledge of the essayists in English, since he had already translated some of the best essays written

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1 See Nityaraj Pandey महाकवि देवकोटा (Great Poet Devkota), op.cit., p. 17.

by them four years before. His essays, therefore, should be interpreted with this background in mind. Moreover, the 'Preface' to the book, written by Devkota himself, mentions Joseph

Addison's essays, the style of which was not being used by him:

"कर्मर्षी पत्र"मा मिष्टर अडिसन साहेबले भूमिकाको परिचायक महत्त्वलाई इस्कारर आफ्नो परिचय पाठकलाई दिइएको तवरले भन्ने यो भूमिका लेख्ने काम गर्नु मलाई ठीक लागेन । कारण, मेरो परिचय मेरो प्रबन्धहरूले साफसँग त्यस पाठकलाई दिनेछन् जो तच्या श्रद्धालाई आँखा लगाएर तिनलाई पत्रिका बीचबीचमा पढ्नेछन् ।

i.e. 'I do not think it proper to give my introduction in the preface as is done by Mr. Addison in De Coverley Papers by giving his introduction to the readers showing that it is very important, because my essays will give my full introduction to the readers who will read the lines in them with regards'. And Devkota himself says that his is the first book of this kind in Nepali "यस किसिमको रचना नेपाली भाषामा प्रचलित नभएकोले भन्ने यसतर्फ हातको कुतकुति नोक्दार कलमले घुटीकालो तवरसँग मार्ने एउटा मीठो प्रयत्न गर्न खोजेको हुँ ।

i.e. 'As there is no such kind of book in Nepali, I have made a sincere attempt, rather wittily, to get rid of the itching of my hands with the sharp nib of my pen'. Modern prose in general along with the essay in the literatures of South-Asian

countries is the result of the influence of English<sup>1</sup>. Thus, Devkota was also inspired to write these 'masterpieces' by his studies of the western essayists, particularly Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, whose The Tatler and The Spectator were read by him, since they had been prescribed in the curriculum of Patna University, from which he had done his B.A. The objective of these publications was, among others, to correct artificialities in social life by using a mild irony so that the person criticised does not feel offended. Devkota also started these pieces in the same fashion, but being a romanticist, as opposed to them, he went far ahead with his powerful emotions, and expressed his ideas on poetry, and on philosophy in them. Therefore, there are, on the one hand, essays like "गधा बुद्धिदमान कि गुरु?" ('Who is wiser the Donkey or the Teacher?'), "कविराजको च्याङ्गे खच्चर" ('The thin Mule of the Ayurvedic Physician'), "भनादमी" ('Gentleman'), in which he laughs at social follies with a sympathetic but corrective tone, and, on the other hand, essays like "पाँचौटा चाहिने कुराहरू" ('Five essential Things'), "छन्द र लय" ('Metre and Rhythm'), "कल्पना" ('Imagination') "सत्य सोझो हुन्छ" ('Truth is straight'), "आकार र अभिप्राय" ('Form and Intention'), etc., which express his serious beliefs in literary

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1 See Nirad C. Chaudhuri, The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1951), p. 486.

and philosophic issues. In short, the book is the manifesto of his thought in such areas, and it should be taken in the same vein as Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads (2nd. ed.) S.F. Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, and P.B. Shelley's Defence of Poetry are taken. As these essays are very helpful to trace Devkota's beliefs in many important issues, they will often be referred to in the subsequent Chapters.

"कुञ्जिनी" ('Kunjini', 2002 V.S., rpt., 2023 V.S.), a shorter poem composed within one night, is based on 'Jhyaure', a folk metre. It deals with the tragic end of the love of Kunjini and Gore Rahut, who died in the war with Germans. The heroine, since she had been betrothed to him before he went to the war, leaped into the Triśūtī river on the very night she was going to be married to Sete, the son of a rich villager. Devkota gave a romantic touch to the end by saying that the villagers said that they saw two shadows near a tree by the side of the river Kolpu, where Kunjini and Gore used to spend the day while tending their cattle.

"रजपुत रमणी" (The lovely young Rajpūt Lady, 2002 V.S.) is a drama staged at the palaces of the Ranas on the glorious virginity of Susamā, the princess of Arāvalī. Once, by way of joke, the Emperor Akbar said that the bravery of Rajput heroes largely depended on the beauty of their women. It was agreed

that the Emperor would try to love Susāma. He tried to seduce her, but, on his failure, he married her to her own lover, Bikram Singh. It is written in simple prose. The message of the drama is this that wealth and power had to bow down to true love.

सुलोचना

('Sulocanā', 2003 V.S., rpt., 2030 V.S.) is

an epic poem consisting of fifteen cantoes, and based on the models of Sanskrit metres. It was written within office hours in ten days. According to the view of the poet, expressed in its preface, it could be called a novel in poetic form. This social epic deals with the tragic love of Sulocanā and Anaṅga along with other social aspects such as the conflict between the old and new thoughts in an Aryan family. As found in all Devkota's epics, it begins with an invocation. The story, in brief, runs like this. After the invocation the poet gives the historical background of the family of Sulocanā's father, Captain Śātrāmardan Singh, whose two sons, Candamardan and Timirmardan, have a friend Anaṅga, the son of the Pandit Basudev. Sulocanā loves him sincerely. But no one knows it. Eventually, her marriage is arranged with Bilas Singh, the rich but spoilt son of Pratap Singh. Anaṅga is informed of the marriage by her maid servant. The day before the marriage was fixed for running away secretly. As ill luck would have it, Anaṅga suffers from fever, and the pre-planned flight could not be carried out. Thus, chance played the key role, and, after

the marriage, she suffers at the hands of her husband, co-wife and other members of the family. Sulocanā determines to devote her life to worshipping Krishna. Anāṅga, on his part, in the guise of a servant in her husband's house, could not help her, and at last, separation comes - she dies of tuberculosis; and he goes mad.

पुतली (Butterfly, 2003 V.S. (?) rpt., 2009 V.S. 2017 V.S.) has two parts. As the title suggests, the two volumes consist of poems for children. Devkota wrote other poems, in addition to them, which are published under the titled सुनको बिहान ('The Golden Morning', 2010 V.S.), and चिप्लो पातल ('The shining Leaves', 2021 V.S.). In these collections the poet chose themes keeping in mind child psychology. No one in the history of Nepalese literature wrote for children as much as he did. In these collections the poet is simple, but emotionally thoughtful.

महेन्दु ('Mhendu', 2003 rpt. 2015, 2025, 2030 V.S.) is a shorter lyrical poem written to a Tamang tune called 'Selo'. The poet, as mentioned earlier, had gone on a walking tour to Gosaitan, and had an experience of the melodious language of the Sherpa Tamangs, a race of Mongoloia origin. This is another attempt of the poet to use the folk-metre in poetry, the first being that in मना-मदन (Manā and Madan). The poem deals with the tragic love of Mhendu, which means 'flower' in Tamang, and Gumbu. Ranja Serpa had

also nourished love for Mhendu. He was unusual. One day Mhendu and Gumbu had gone to the bank of the Tadi river. Someone informed Ranja that they were going to run away. He went there, and challenged Gumbu. Mhendu leaped into the flooded river, and her lever also followed suit. Thus, the innocent lovers sacrificed themselves against an ignorant but aggressive power. The villagers hear the amorous song of the lovers in the waves of the river Tādi.

रावण-जटायु युद्ध

(The Fight between Ravana and Jatayu,

2003 V.S. (written), 2015 V.S.), a shorter poem, written in poetic prose, deals with the mythical story of fight between Ravan, the King of Lanka, and Jatāyu, an old vulture, which was killed. Sita, the wife of Rama, was, thus, kidnapped by the powerful Ravana, though opposed by the old but determined vulture. This mythological event was used for several implications, such as that Ravana is identified with the luxurious Rana Prime Minister, Sita stands for Devketa's poetry, the poet identified himself with the vulture, etc.<sup>1</sup> After writing this poem, the poet exiled himself to India to join the revolutionaries there.

कृषि-वाम्नी

(The Farm-daughter, 2000-03 V.S.

(written), 2021 V.S.), a lyrical drama of progressive ideas,

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1 See Dr. C. Bandhu, देवकोटा

('Devkota'), op. cit., p. 467.

depicts the struggle of the villagers against Shree Prasad, the landlord. The dialogues are cast in the varied folk-metres of the songs of the common man.

Uṣā and Kiran were born in a village beside the Salinadi. They were happily married. But the landlord had evil designs on the brides; and Kiran was imprisoned for a while, to be freed with the help of the jailor. On his release he went to Benares for education, and after three years came back to punish the man of evil designs. In the meanwhile Uṣā was freed from the clutches of the feudal landlord by the help of Muniyan, another victim of Shree Prasad's licentiousness. After her release, she went to a forest, and lived in a cave for three years. Kiran went to seek her there. Shree Prasad also went there with Cature with the intention of killing him. They went to the temple of Kali to pray so that they could perform their evil design. To their surprise, Kali hurled stones at them. They ran off with fear at their heels. Kiran, on the other hand, met a hermit, who helped him to trace Uṣā. They went home happily to the rejoicing of the villagers.

लानी ('Lānī', 2001 V.S. (written), 2023 V.S.), a shorter lyrical poem, is similar to Mhendū in theme and style, depicting love between lovers of the Mongolian culture. The distinct characteristic of the poem is this that the poet profusely used the dialect spoken by the common man in it, i.e. the Tibetanized version of Nepali.

Lānī, the daughter of the king of Helambu was enchanted by the skilful display of athletics by Cannā in the festival of Mārdaun. But he was the son of a poor father. From then on she nursed her liking for him. Unfortunately, she was married to Hlano, the prince of Tibet. On the knowledge that Cannā also nourished love for his daughter, Lānī's father sent him to a Īamaist cave ( गुप्त ) for learning and penance. After her marriage Lānī could not be allured to the luxury of the place. Seeing her plight, Zinxi, her maid-servant, who knew the real cause of her illness, with the help of Ānxiā, told Ghosingo, the noted magician in Tantras about it. He, seeing all by his supernatural power, said that Lānī belonged to Cannā, not to Hlano, who accordingly was sent for learning and penance in place of the former. Thus, she was united with the lover.

हेरिपति प्रतप (Maharāṇa Pratāp , 2024 V.S.), an epic consisting of sixteen Cantos and modelled on Sanskrit metre, is about the glory of the King of Mewar, who fought against the mighty Mugal Emperor to preserve the sovereignty of his country. Beginning with an invocation of Kali, the vanquisher of demons and giants and fond of human blood, and Bhima, who is famous for his courage and strength, it depicts a vivid portrait of the patriotic king to utter poverty, though firm in his principles. His unique and patriotic fervour is made distinct against the portrait of Man Singh, who agreed to a marital relationship of his sister with Akbar. After his defeat

at Haldighat, Maharana Pratap exiled himself to a forest, and spent a life of exemplary suffering and poverty there. It should be noted that Devkota gave an expression to his feelings in dealing with heroes and heroines who suffered for the cause of humanity in different culture, crossing over the political border of his native land in this poem as well as in many ones.

मनोरञ्जन ('Entertainment', 2024 V.S.), a collection of twenty five humorous and satirical poems, was written when the poet was suffering from cancer. The book gives light entertainment, and is not written with his usual emotional sentiment. In the preface the poet confesses that "गहिरा पानी सुकेछ। लेउ काई समेत केही यहाँ छन्। i.e. 'The deep well has dried up, and even the coating and the scum are here'.

चम्पा (Campā, 2000-03 V.S. (written), 2024 V.S.), a brief novel consisting of four Chapters deals with the rebellion of a woman in Nepalese society. Its story is as follows:

Campā, the grand-daughter of Shreekanta, was to be married when she was twelve. She seriously thought about her husband to be in the night before the marriage was performed. Before going to sleep, she determined that she would not marry to him. But she could do nothing. Unfortunately, she found that her husband, Ram Kanta was ugly and had been suffering from tuberculosis. On her doctor's recommendation, they had to live separately even after his recovery. But he was conscious of the

unfulfilled sexual desire of his wife. However, his mother used to watch him closely for the obvious reason of his health. Ram Kanta, as he had an ideal character, thought it better to leave his house secretly for good. But his wife knew all about it, and thought to devote her life to worship. But the repressed sexual desire had been working in her, and she could not stop quarrelling with the other family members who used to blame her for the disappearance of her husband. Eventually, she went back to her father's house.

In Campā Devkota explained repressed human desires according to the Freudian theory of Psychology. It should be remembered that he was interested in Freud, and his translation of The Interpretation of Dreams into Nepali has already been mentioned. Another point to note in the novel is this that Devkota's women characters are mostly submissive, but the heroine in this case is rebellious.

नवसंज्ञ (Nine-sentiments, 2005-6 V.S. (written), 2025 V.S.) a poem consisting of several stanzas for nine sentiments, was written while the poet had been living in Benaras. The book was written on contract with Fika Dafia Dhital, the owner of 'Nepali Saubhagya Pustakalaya'. According to Dr. Iswar Baral it was agreed that there would be one hundred and twenty five stanzas for each sentiment<sup>1</sup>. The nine sentiments on which the

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1 See Dr. C. Bandhu, देवकोटा (Devkota), op.cit., p. 150.

poem was written are "शिंमार" ('eroticism'), "शान्त" ('quietism'), "वीभत्स" ('disgust'), "भयानक" ('terror'), "वीर" ('heroism'), "हास्य" ('humorous'), "अद्भुत" ('frightening'), "करुण" ('Compassion'), and "रौद्र" ('Violence'). But the number of stanzas has varied, and there are only six lines for the last one in the book.

कटक (Katak, 2026 V.S.) is a poem in which the poet sang the unique glory of the Nepalese heroes, Balabhadra, Amarsingh, Bhakti Thapa, etc., who had sacrificed their lives in the war Nepal fought against the East India Company during 1814 to 1816 A.D. in Katak. Thus, nationalism is the main theme in the poem.

म्याकवेथ ('Macbeth', 2026 V.S.) is a rendering of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' into Nepali with a lengthy introduction about the author, along with the historical phases of English literature, and the general trends of the Shakespearean dramas, emphasising the tragic ones. As has already been mentioned while dealing with his translation of the English essays into Nepali, this rendering is another proof of his interest in and mastery over English.

There are some collections of Devkota's poem such as भावनागमियर ('The mighty Imagination, 2024 V.S.), आकाश बोल्छ ('The Sky Speaks', 2025 V.S.), छाँगासँग कुरा ('Conversation with a Waterfall', 2026 V.S.). They were written when he was living in India. Some of the important poems of these anthologies will be described in the second chapter, and will also be

referred to in the subsequent Chapters. Recently, the Royal Nepal Academy published a few shorter poems, about which it is said that they were recovered from the relatives of Tika Dalīā Dhital, who had bought them from the poet in Benaras. Some of them had already been reviewed by Dr. Delli Ram Timsena<sup>1</sup>. However, they will briefly be discussed below.

मेना (Mainā, 2039 V.S.) is the first shorter poem along with other six ones included under this title. The others are वसन्ती ('Basanti'), सृजामाता (Srijāmātā), नेपाली मेघदूत (Nepali Meghadūt), वैराग्य न्हरी (Bairāgya Laharī) आनन्द शतक (Ānanda Śatak), and ज्ञाना वर्णन (Jhanjā Barnan). The first is the story of terrifying witchcraft, which Mainā practised. In mid-night she went to a witch living in an inn under a Pipal tree in seclusion to learn the black art for captivating her brother-in-law since her own husband was very ugly. On her learning it, she poisoned him, and consequently her daughter also, who used to remind her of him by asking where her father had gone. These heinous crimes committed, she saw in a vision the ghost of her husband. Other ominous signs, such as the yelping of a dog, weeping of cats like human beings, snakes flying in the sky, etc. are also mentioned. Though she gratified

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1 See "महाकवि देवकोटाका तीनवटा अपकाशित काव्य" (Three unpublished Poems of the great Poet Devkota'), Roop-Rakha, 8(8), Dec., 1966, pp. 55-65.

her sensual cravings with her lover, she lost her peace, and, eventually, died on a day in which an eagle carried away a black snake to the sky. Her lover died by a thunderbolt falling on his head. The supernatural objects along with the characters remind the readers of Shakespeare's Hamlet, though projected in the Nepalese context. It is written in Jhyaure, a folk metre commonly heard in folk songs in Nepal.

बसन्ती (Basanti), the second shorter poem in the collection, modelled on the same metre as that of the first one, deals with the romantic love of Basanti and Banbir. Basanti was to be married to Asarphī Thapa, an old man, against her wish. On her rejecting him, he ordered his servants to kidnap her for him. But Banbir defeated them all, and the lovers were united happily.

सृजामता (Srijāmātā), consisting of five sections and written in Jhyaure metre, a popular folk metre, deals with the Greek legend according to which Persephone, daughter of Mother Earth, had to stay six months in the earth and the remaining period in the land of the dead. Devkota described how she had been abducted by the king of the Underworld, and how her mother sought her for many days with a flame in her hand. Her distress is described pathetically. In the course of her seeking, Mother Earth worked as a wet-nurse to Demophoon the youngest son of King Celeus. She wanted to make the child immortal by burning its mortality but could not burn it by holding the child over

fire, since its mother entered into the room before the process was complete. At last she came to know where her daughter was and reached the underworld. Having tasted one seed of pomegranate, her daughter, however, could not return to earth. With the good offices of Hermes, who had been sent by Zeus, a compromise was reached: Persephone would remain six months as the queen of the land of dead, and the remaining six months on earth. Devkota's version deviates at some important points from the original legend<sup>1</sup>.

The poet devoted the last section of the poem explaining his romantic belief that the earth is living, and has its own soul against the empiricist philosophy which explained that it was a lifeless heap of matter. He also expressed his view that the universe is governed by one and the same soul. Along with this message he interpreted the implication of the legend in the context of the Aryan culture.

नेपाली मेघदूत (Nepalī Meghadūt, Nepali Cloud-messenger) is modelled on Mandākrānta Chanda i.e. metre with seventeen syllables in a quarter. The poem reminds us of Kalidās's Meghadūt. Separated from his wife and living in Benares the poet gave an expression to his own feelings. He, therefore, requested the north-eastern cloud to take his affectionate

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1 See Robert Groves, The Greek Myths: Volume one (Great Britain: Penguin, rpt., 1975), pp. 89-90.

message to his <sup>love</sup> named Nānī Mainju in Kathmandu. The speciality of the poem is this that the poet depicted the geographical, natural, historical and cultural, importance of the way between Kathmandu and Benares vividly. Along with these, he severely criticized the tyranny of the Rana autocracy in it. This is, thus, an important document to reveal the thoughts of the poet during his voluntary exile.

बैराग्य लहरी (Bairagya Laharī, or An ascetic wave)

consisting of three hundred and eighty seven stanzas written in Śikharāṇī and Drutabilambita metres, deals with the renunciation of materialistic desires, and acceptance of the spiritual path. In his other poems he did not deal with such an ascetic theme exclusively. Perhaps, the poet wrote this one on contract. Even in such spiritual vein, he could not help attacking at places the regressive rule in Nepal.

आनन्द शतक (Ananda Śatak, or Satiety) in one hundred

verses written rhythmically in Bhujāṅgaprayāt chanda needs a little explanation. As has been already mentioned in the introduction of this thesis Nepali literature has been much influenced by Islamic. Devkota also is not free from that. The influence of Omar Khaiyam is discerned by the editors of the book. They said, प्रस्तुत काव्य उमर डेयामका रुवाइयात् {रुवाइहरू}- बाट उत्प्रेरित भएको बुझिन्छ । देवकोटाको "कवियात" सँग "रुवाइयात"को सम्बन्ध रहेको अनुभव हुन्छ ।'

i.e. 'The present poem seems to be inspired by Omar Khaiyam's Ru'ayyat (weeping). Devkota's Kavivāt [ part of Devkota's title in the manuscript<sup>1</sup> ], it is perceived, should be related to Ru'ayyat.' As is well-known, the Urdu poet perceived Nature as the eternal beauty, and the drinking of it gave him lasting pleasure. Devkota in the same vein depicted her in his hundred stanzas.

झणजा वर्णन

(Jhanjā Barṇan, The description of a storm) ✓

the last shorter poem in the collection, consisting of one hundred and twenty four stanzas, deals with the terrifying aspect of nature. Modelled on Srag̃harā Chanda, the mighty movement of his emotions in depicting the rebellious storm is very pictorial. It has been regarded as one of the great poems in arousing the revolutionary consciousness in both a national and an international contexts. This is a clarion-call for revolution, after which the world would be ruled by truth, goodness, and beauty. Thus, the storm is the symbolical representation of the means of recreating a new human civilization free from injustice and oppression. The flow of Devkota's language is aided by the use of onomatopoeia in the poem.

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1 Ibid.