



Language Planning Problems in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims at creating a plurilingual and multicultural profile of Nepal - one of the Himalayan countries in South Asia – which had had problems in planning its economic as well as educational affairs. It is hoped that this profile along with the issues raised here will contribute to the debate as to how the promises made in her fifth and latest Constitution about safe-guarding the interests of minority language speakers could be realized by taking appropriate status planning measures to alter the present aberrations.

The paper is divided into nine sections: (i) Introduction: The Region and the Challenges, (ii) Nepal: A Profile of Major Ethnic Languages, (iii) Minor Language Communities in Nepal, (iv) Nepal: The Endangered Languages, (v) Nepal: Nearly Extinct Languages, (vi) The Pattern and Problems of Education, (vii) Education Reforms, (viii) Constitutional provisions and Languages of Nepal; and (ix) Planning options.

Keywords: *Ethnic languages, Minor languages, Extinct languages, Constitutional provision, Language Planning*

1. The Region and the Challenges

With per capita GDP of around US \$ 1,399, Nepal is the 17th poorest country in the world, after Somalia (as per 1995 World Bank report). About 21% of Nepal's population live in absolute poverty, derived at a per capita earning per year at \$225. Given this dismal scenario, the sociolinguistic situation of Nepal has been worrisome for smaller speech groups. For linguists and social anthropologists, the country provides a wide scope for an in-depth study because of its inherent plurality. Early enough, in a document titled *World Bank in Nepal: Country Assistance Strategy 1999-2001*, we were warned that “this report carries a central message: Poverty in Nepal is deep and complex, and only a concerted effort to improve public interventions while mobilizing community initiative holds hope for a reduction in poverty”. It has been stated in the prefatory remarks of the Report on *Poverty Reduction and the World Bank: Progress in Operationalizing the WDR 2000/01*, “Attacking persistent poverty in low-

and middle-income countries is the greatest single challenge facing the global development community as the world moves forward into the 21st century. But despite progress during the past decade, the battle is far from won, and progress has been slower than had been hoped at the beginning of the 1990s.” Further, the IMF and Government of Nepal Reports, especially the second Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2003/04 in early 2005 results show encouraging improvements in access to basic social and economic services and in the living standards of people. Overall, the incidence of poverty has declined by 11 percentage points between 1995/96 and 2003/04, a decline by 3.7 percent each year. In 2003/04, 31 percent of the population lived in poverty compared to 42 percent in 1995/96. Let us now look at the situation in terms of linguistic plurality.

Nepal is plural not only her language and cultural heritage, but also in its spatial characteristics. Ecologically it is divided into three regions, mountain, hill and Terai. The rural poor in Nepal mostly belong to far-flung hill regions (4.6 millions as against 2.6 millions from Terai). Although their per capita per annum income is slightly better than the Terai city and village-dwellers and their literacy rate (39%) is higher than their Terai counter-parts (22%), the language loss among the Hill dwellers is much more

Although the privatisation process in have also begun in the field of providing school education, the rural poor often cannot afford such expensive education. Further, since only 9% of households controlled over 47% of the agricultural land in the country, resources and opportunities for the economically weaker speech communities would be becoming more and more scarce. Coupled with that is the fact that Nepal has a truly plural profile of languages: About 20,188,000 speakers (1995-figure) are reported to speak 124 languages in Nepal, out of which Nepali, the National language of Nepal, is spoken and understood by 58.3% of the population. But there are at least 9 other Indo-Aryan languages with 60,000 to 1,370,000 speakers with Bhojpuri, Maithili, Awadhi, Rajbanshi and five varieties of Tharu. Some Tibeto-Burman languages, such as Newari (775,000 speakers) do carry a lot of prestige and membership, but 9 others, including several Tamang, Magar, Gurung varieties and Tibetan, have speakers, ranging from 60,000 to 718,000. Besides the above 20, there are 34 other speech-groups, i.e. 8 Indo-Aryan, 2 Austro-Asiatic and 24 Tibeto-Burman languages, which have added to the complexity of the multilingual profile of Nepal. For any economically insolvent country, to plan and manage these many languages (54 of these with 50,000 plus speakers each) is an uphill task.

The complexity gets more pronounced because owing to the lure of good life and globalization, every community wants to rush to an English-medium school, whereas this is a country where schools have 52% to 66% untrained teachers, and one of the highest failure-rates in English- close to 80%. If, therefore, the school-drop-outs increase day by day, one should not be surprised. Another consequence of this bewildering picture of language vitality and necessity to undergo language shift is that four Indo-Aryan languages (Palpa, Darai, Dehati and Hindi) and 43 minor Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal with 100 to 3,000 speakers only are going to be wiped out of the country’s language and ethnic map soon. In addition, one could

enlist 23 other languages, mostly Tibeto-Burman speech varieties, and only one being Dravidian, which are almost extinct. Their disappearance is only a matter of time.

The immediate consequences have been the following:

- Only 39% children enrolled in grade I complete the primary education cycle,
- The adult literacy levels are just 36.72 percent, the lowest in South Asia (NHDR report),
- Girls comprise two-thirds of all children of school-going age not attending classes,
- According to a recent study, prepared by the Ministry of Education, nearly 1 million children of school-going age are still out of the school system.

It could be easily seen by an impartial observer that although the international agencies such as the World Bank, IMF, the Danish DANIDA, the Japan Grant Fund and others did launch a Basic and Primary Education project in 1993 and pumped in about 100 million dollars then, and committed another set of amount this year, Nepal's education reforms have not shaped up well.

The problem is further compounded because in her fifth Constitution (dated 1990), the government had already committed to creating and sustaining Nepal as “a multiethnic, *multilingual*, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom” (Constitution, 1990, Article 4.1), and also stated that “All the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal.” (Article 6). From the status planning choices before HMG Nepal, therefore, heterogeneity cannot be wished away, nor can it be overlooked.

Further, in terms of regions, Nepal is divisible into three main blocks: The Himalayan Ranges that also house some high plateaux, the Valleys which include Kathmandu and a number of other fertile valleys with altitude ranging between 900 and 1200 meters, and the Terai region in the southern part of Nepal at the foothills with a tropical forest climate. Some further differentiate between the Kathmandu valley region and the Annapurna valley. The agriculture sector absorbs more than 80% of Nepal's labour force. Approximately 18% of the land area has been brought under agricultural operation, 53% of which is in the Terai region. The country is divided administratively into 5 development regions and 75 districts. Ecologically it is divided into three regions, mountain, hill and Terai.

Nepal's foreign investment portfolio now includes 554 enterprises worth Rs.65.94 billion, 23% of which is provided by foreign capital. Privatisation began in the late 1980s, and has gained momentum since the early 1990s, when the democratically elected government came to power. Approximately 16 small and medium-sized enterprises have been privatised since the programme began in the late 1980s. The experts identified the following reasons for Nepal's problems: the feudal socio-economic structure, high rate of population growth, declining productivity in agriculture, inequitable land distribution and access to productive resources, lack of institutional and

policy frameworks. According to a World Bank report (1991: xi), between 7 and 8 million of Nepal's population (of 19 million) live in absolute poverty, defined as having income below the level required to support a minimum daily calorie intake. And an overwhelmingly majority of the poor are rural subsistence farmers. The poor people of Nepal live in rural areas (95%) and are located more often in the hills than in the Terai. Further, Nepal's growing foreign debt burden, combined with new loans, have led to greater dependency. According to the estimates of the National Planning Commission of Nepal (NPC), based on the minimum expenditure needs, about 49% of the population failed to meet the minimum necessities of life in 1992. While this figure is greatly reduced now, a joint study conducted by the WB/UNDP argues that the poor, like everyone else in Nepal, are engaged in agriculture on their own (or rented) land. The only exception is in the Terai, where 28% of the economically active poor are employed by others as agricultural wage labourers, and another 25% in services or other miscellaneous activities. Only about 5% of the active poor are employed in production or manufacturing jobs of any kind, including rural cottage industries. Coupled with these problems one must also note the land distribution pattern in Nepal: 50% of households own only 6.6 % of the cultivated land, each household owning less than 0.5 hectares. It is interesting to note that more than two thirds of households possess less than one hectare of land and account for only 17.4% of the cultivated land. On the other hand only 9% of households control over 47% of the agricultural land. Thus in Nepal, it is clear that a small segment of the population controls most of the land resources and opportunities. Earlier studies had attributed Nepal's poverty to the under-developed structure of production, a high population growth rate, lack of "political will", lack of marketing facilities, inappropriate technology, under and unemployment, lack of foreign aid and administrative inefficiency.

2. Nepal: A Profile of Major Ethnic Languages

Let us turn towards the ethnic profile. As is expected, like any other truly varied South Asian country, Nepal too has had a large number of people coming in and settling over many centuries – and a lot of intermingling of races going on, so much so that it has given rise to a truly plural profile of languages. It must be mentioned here that Nepalese women, until today, still do not have any legal provision to own land.

The Annapurna region, too, has its own share of ethnic groups. The prominent among them being the Manang - the Kagbeni from near the Kagbeni fort and adjacent areas, and the Mustang people. About 20,188,000 speakers (1995-figure) are reported to speak 124 languages in Nepal, out of which 2,423,840 are speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages (Matisoff, J. 1991). The list with brief descriptions given below also include a few languages that are nearly extinct. Sonia Eagle (2000) records only 14 Indo-Aryan languages against 36 Tibeto-Burman languages in Nepal. The exact

figures for some language speakers (as in the case of the last four under Indo-Aryan or for Bagheli) are unknown and hence not attempted here. Similarly, different kinds of Tharu are not collapsed for obvious reasons. (One could, of course, argue two varieties of Maithili to be under the same head.) However, our figure of IA and TB, based on a number of studies, referred to in appropriate places.

Among the **Indo-Aryan languages**, Nepali, the National language of Nepal, is spoken by 58.3% of the population ((Johnstone 1993). It is also spoken by 6,000,000 in India (1984 Far Eastern Economic Review) and by 300,000 in Bhutan (Dorji 1973). Bhojpuri had, in 1981-Census a figure of 1,142,805 (Johnstone 1993); 23,375,000 in India (1994-figure). Spoken in the areas just across Indian border from Raxaul. Almost all speakers are highly bilingual in a variety of Hindi and Maithili. On the other hand, Maithili is spoken by 11% of the population in Nepal (1985), whereas the Indian figure is 22,000,000 (1981-Census). Awadhi had 20,000,000 in India by 1951 census – the latest figures are unknown. Tharu, Dang too has 31,000 speakers in India (1981 census). Unclassified but many dialects. A distinct language from other Tharu. 74% to 79% lexical similarity with Kathoriya, 72% to 74% with Sunha, upto 65% with Hindi. Some varieties listed as dialects have only 71% to 79% intelligibility of others. Tharu, Rana Thakur, on the other hand, has 194,000 speakers in Nepal and 64,000 in India (1981 census). It shows 83% to 97% lexical similarity among dialects. Here are the IA languages:

Lg	Name	Alternate Names	Speakers	Region	Dialects	Literacy/ Bilingual.
IA0 1	Nepali	<i>Gorkhali, Khaskura, Parbatiya,</i>	9,900,000	Eastern; adj. South central reg.	Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajurali, Doteli, Acchami, Jumleli,	
IA0 2	Bhojpuri	<i>Bajpuri</i>	1,370,000	Birganj	Bhojpuri Tharu & Teli	50-75%; bilingual
IA0 3	Maithili	<i>Tirahutia</i>	2,260,000	Dhanusa; Janakpur Zone, E. Terai	Bantar, Barmeli, Kawar, Kisan, Kyabrat, Makrana, Musar, Sadri/Tati	25-50% Upper caste bilingual
IA0 4	Awadhi	<i>A(m)bohi, Baiswari, Kojali, Kosali</i>	540,000	Lumbini, Majhkhanda, Khajahani		50- 75% Biling. Hin/Nep
IA0 5	Tharu, Dang	<i>Dangora, Dangali, Dangha</i>	228,000	Dang Valley, Dang-Deokri District	Sivratnapur Dangora, Kotanidang Chandanpur Dangora	5-15% Highly bilingual
IA0	Tharu,	Nil	194,000	Far S-W dist	Rana Sugia,	5-15%

6	Rana Thakur			-Kanchanpur and Kailali	Sisaikera, Sisana, Bangama,& Thakur	
IA07	Rajbanshi	<i>Tajpuri</i>	94,000	Jhapa-Koshi zones, Morang	Kurtha	
IA08	Tharu, Deokri		80,000	Eastern border		5-15%
IA09	Tharu, Kathoriya	<i>Kathariya</i>	60,000	Dangora– in Kailali dist. Keri/Gonda		66% similarity with Hindi
IA10	Tharu Saptari		60,000	Saptari; Sagarmatha	Morangiya	5-15%

Among the **Tibeto-Burman languages**, Newari has 3% of the population of Nepal (Johnstone 1993), but is also spoken in Bettiah, Bihar, India. Kathmandu is the prestige dialect, whereas Kirtipur is close to it and Baktapur speakers can mostly understand Kathmandu. Newari uses Devanagari script. Eastern Tamang is also spoken in India by 13,177 (1994 IMA). Some have migrated to Sikkim and Darjeeling, India. Also in Bhutan and Myanmar. Limbu is also spoken by 26,538 in India (1994 IMA); also in Bhutan. It has many dialects and is related to Lohorong and Yakha. Lexical similarity among the dialects is from 60% to 91%. Inherent intelligibility among the dialect speakers. 28% of adult speakers (24% of men and 3% of women) have even completed 5 years of school, and the Limbu have their own script, dating to the early 18th century. Gurung is spoken also in Bhutan, possibly even in Myanmar. Dialects: Southern, Used as a school language. Tibetan, as we of course know, has 124,280 speakers in India (1994), 3,000 in Bhutan (1973), and still 1,066,200 in China (1990 census). It is used mostly in Kathmandu.

LG F A M	Name	Altern. Names	Speakers	Region	Dialects	Literacy/ Biling.
TB11	Newari		775,000	Kathmandu & midlands	Kathmandu Kirtipur, Bhaktapur, Dolkhali, Pahri, Sindhu-Palchok	15-25% Loss in Hindu Newar
TB12	Tamang, Eastern		584,097 - 718,048	Kabhre, Sindhu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu Nuwakot	Sailing; Temal	25-50%
TB	Magar,	<i>Magari,</i>	288,383	Tanahu, Gandaki,		25-50%

13	Eastern	<i>Manggar</i>		Central mountains		Biling. Nepali
TB 14	Limbu	<i>Yakthungba Pan, Yakthungpan</i>	254,088	Eastern hills, Arun/Koshi riv, Dhankuta, Sankhuwasabha, & Tehrathum	Taplejung, Panthare, Phedappe, Chhattare, Chaubise	40%; Proficiency in Nepali
TB 15	Magar, Western		210,000	Pokhara, Nawalparasi , Surkhet, Banke Dialekh, Koshi		5-15%; Partly Bilingual
TB 16	Tamang, NW.	<i>Murmi, W. Tamang</i>	186,408 - 320,350	Bagmati Zone, Nuwakot District		25-75%
TB 17	Tamang, SW.		100,000	Nuwakot, Lalitpur, Makwanpur Cent mountains		25-75%
TB 18	Gurung	<i>Western Gurung</i>	90,000	Western Gurung area, Kaski and Syangja districts	Syangja Gurung, W. Kaski Gurung	Used as School language
TB 19	Gurung, E.	<i>Daduwa, Lanjung</i>	60,000	Lamjung, Gorkha districts		
TB 20	Tibetan	<i>Lhasa, Bhotia, Zang</i>	60,000	Mostly in Kathmandu	3 dialects	

3. *Minor Language Communities in Nepal*

The following 8 Indo-Aryan, 2 Austro-Asiatic and 24 Tibeto-Burman languages have added to the complexity of the multilingual profile of Nepal. These are the 34 speech communities that are really facing identity crisis today and are struggling to stop the general trend of language shift among the younger generation today. As for the IA group, many remain unclassified to this day, such as the two Tharu speeches or Sonha, etc.. Some bear the same names. Tharu of Jhapa is a dialect of a different Indo-Aryan language. Some, like Dhanwar shows typological affinities with Northwestern zone, but belongs to the Dardic group. Some, like Sonha have 80% intelligibility with others such as Dangura Tharu, and could also be a caste-dialect for gold-panners. About some (like Bagheli, also called *Mannadi, Riwai, Ganggai, Mandal, Kewot, Kewani*), all we know is that they are Indo-Aryan trade languages, but exact figure of speakers is not clear. Many like Dhimal, have only one or two dialects - Toto, but speakers are partially bilingual in Nepali or Hindi. Bote-Majhi seems to be an occupational variety - mainly spoken by boatmen along various rivers and fishermen. Some, like Majhi may be also spoken in India but are distinct from Majhi in Panjabi group or Bote-Majhi.

Among the TB group, too, some like Bantawa have many mutually intelligible dialects, including Dilpali, Hangkhim, Dhankuta, Chhintang, Dungmali, Waling, Rungchenbung, Amchoke and Yangma, and are used as

the traditional lingua franca among Rai minorities in Limbuwan, Sikkim India, and Bhutan. The younger generation here invariably move towards becoming bilingual in Nepali. Some, like Kham, Takale have tremendous lexical similarities with others: 71% with Gamale Kham, Maikoti-Hukam, Nisi; 58% with Bhujel Kham, 51% with Sheshi; about 25% lexical similarity with Magar and Gurung, slightly below 25% with the Tibetan group. Yet, it is distinct from the Kham of eastern Tibet as spoken by the Khampa. People have limited bilingualism in Nepali but they use Kham in all domains and they migrate in summer to the foot of glaciers, and in winter to the south of Rolpa. Some, like the Lopas are reasonably advanced in education. Lo dialect has 78% lexical similarity with Baragaunle/Dolpo; 65% with Lhasa Tibetan/Kutang Bhotia. In some cases, a language is spoken by many as L2, e.g. about 15 to 35,000 know Bantawa as L2 (1991 W. Winter). Some, like Olangchuk Gola are truly scattered: including 3,500 in the original area; 30 to 35 families in Kathmandu, 200 families in Taplejung, and 100 families in Dankute; also 300 in Darjeeling, India. In all areas except in Kathmandu there is a strong cultural identity among them, although the young are losing the language. Each main village has a school and they show some intermarriages with Lhomi and Tibetan speakers. Some, such as Northern Norung, may have ethnic subgroups, Kipa and Loke Lorung, but they do not appear to speak different dialects. In comparison, Camling too has many ethnic subgroups, but linguistically homogeneous. Many of them have given up mother tongue and speak a variety mixed with Nepali. Speakers of Kham, Sheshi show limited bilingualism in Nepali where language use is vigorous. If all Kham group of languages could be taken together, we get 40,000 speakers. Among Chourase, language retention is extremely strong, even though they have some degree of bilingualism. Helambu Sherpa shows 66% lexical similarity with Dolpo and Olangchung Gola; 65% with Lhasa Tibetan; 63% with Lopa and Sherpa; 61% with Kutang Bhotia, and is related to Kagate but is more prestigious, preserves original culture. Thami may also be in China, although not known by that name. It is related to Baraamu (Grierson-Konow). For languages like Thakali, many live outside the area. Tukche is the cultural center and is the prestige dialect. Other dialects, Marpha and Syang, show 44% to 51% lexical similarity with Gurung. In case of some, lexical similarities are very high and yet they are distinct languages, e.g. Dolpo has 78% lexical similarity with Lopa; 70% with Baragaunle; 69% with Lhomi; 68% with Lhasa Tibetan, Olangchung Gola, and Kyerung; 67% with Kutang Bhotia; 66% with Helambu Sherpa; 62% with Jirel and Sherpa.

The following are these 34 minor language-groups of Nepal with necessary details given under three sub-sections:

3.1. Indo-Aryan (IA):

IA21. THARU, MAHOTARI 32,000 (1981 census). Mahottari District, Janakpur Zone. Unclassified. Distinct language from other Tharu. 5% to 15% literate.

IA22. THARU, CHITWAN 31,179 in Nepal; 776,000 all Tharu (Johnstone 1993), 4% of population. Southern strip in Rapti Valley, Chitwan. 5-15% literate.

IA23. DHANWAR (*Danuwar Rai, Denwar*) 16,000 (Johnstone 1993). Eastern hills and plain, inner Terai, Sindhuli Garhi, Makwanpur District, Narayani Zone.

IA24. SONHA 10,000 (1985). Karnali River, Kailali; Seti, Bheri & Mahakali Zones.

IA25. BAGHELI Nepal figures unknown (880,000 in India). Morang, Koshi Zone;.

IA26. DHIMAL 8,188 (UN 1961). Mechi Zone, Jhapa District, Biratnagar, eastern Terai.

IA27. BOTE-MAJHI (*Kushar*) 6,000. Chitawan, Narayani Zone, near Kumhali.

IA28. MAJHI (*Manjhi*) 5,895 in Nepal (1961). Eastern hills, Dolakha , Janakpur Zone.

3.2. Tibeto-Burman Languages (TB):

TB29. BANTAWA (*Bantawa Rai, Bantawa Yüing, Bantawa Dum*) 35,000 or more (1985 N.K. Rai); Bhojpur, Western Dhankuta and Khotang Districts.

TB30. THULUNG (*Thulunge Rai, Deusali, Thululoa, Thulung La, Toaku Lwa*) 25,000 in all countries (Winter 1991); Eastern hills, Solukhumbu/Okhaldhung dt, Sagarmatha.

TB31. CHEPANG 18,000 to 27,000 (1991-figures). Inner Terai; Narayani Zone, Makwanpur, Chitwan, South Gorkha, and South Dhading districts. Two closely related dialects: Eastern Chepang, Western Chepang. 5% to 15% literate.

TB32. KHAM, TAKALE (*Kham-Magar, Takale, Parbate*) 15,000 (1988); Spoken in Rapti, Rukum, and Rolpa zones, Taka-Shera being the center. Dialect: Wali. 5% literate.

TB33. LOPA (*Loyu, Loba, Mustang, Lo Montang*) 20,000 (1985). Dhawalagiri Zone, Dolpa, Mustang districts, north central. Unclassified. Dialects: Lo, Seke.

TB34. SUNWAR (*Sunuwar(i), Mukhiya, Kwoico Lo*) 20,000 to 25,000 (W. Winter 1991). Eastern hills, Ramechhap District, Janakpur Zone, and

northwestern Okhaldhunga District. Dialect: Surel. Related to Bahing; Some bilingualism in Nepali. 5-15% literate.

TB35. THAMI 20,000 in Nepal (1985). Janakpur Zone, Dolakha District.

TB36. KULUNG (*Khulunge Rai, Kulu Ring, Khulung, Kholung*) 15,000 (W. Winter 1991). Solukhumbu, Sagarmatha Zone, & eastern hills. Dialects: Sotang, Mahakulung, Tamachhang, Pidiso, Chhapkoa. Related to Sangpang and Nachereng.

TB37. SHERPA (*Sharpa, Sharpa Bhotia*) 14,126 in Nepal; 19,000 in India (1994); Solu Khumbu District, northern mountains. It extends north from Namche Bazaar and to Solu in the south and around Lukla. Mostly in Kathmandu, and in Bhutan; 5-15% literate.

TB38. OLANGCHUNG GOLA (*Walungchung Gola, Walung*) 10,000 to 15,000, (1990). Sankhuwasawa District, Koshi Zone, in 5 main villages. Also in Lungthung, Amjile, and Kambachen. Unclassified. 71% lexical similarity with Lhasa Tibetan.

TB39. HELAMBU SHERPA (*Yolmu*) 5,000 to 15,000 (1985). Nuwakot and Sindhupalchok districts, Bagmati Zone, Nakote, Ratmate, Helambu, down to Kathmandu. Bilingualism in Nepali is limited. 15% to 25% literate.

TB40. KHALING (*Khalinge Rai, Khäl Bra, Khaling Bat*) 12,000 or more (1996). Solu Khumbu District, Sagarmatha Zone.. Dialects: Balurus, Romlo, Phuleli. 5-15% literate.

TB41. GHALE, SOUTHERN (*Galle Gurung*) 12,000 (Nishi 1975). Gandaki Zone, Gorkha Dt, Buri Gandaki Valley, South of Laprak. Barpak is prestigious dialects; others: Kyaura, Laprak. 65% to 81% lexical similarity with North. Ghale. 5-15% literate.

TB42. KHAM, GAMALE 10,000 (1988). Gam Khola, western hills, Rukum and Rolpa districts, Rapti Zone. 71% lexical similarity with Takale Kham (closest), 55% with Nisi and Sheshi, 54% with Maikoti-Hukam, 45% with Bhujel. People have limited bilingualism in Nepali. Language use is vigorous. 5% to 15% literate.

TB43. CAMLING 10,000 or fewer (Karen Ebert 1995). Rawa Valley, Khotang District, Sagarmatha Zone.

TB44. JANGGALI (*Jhangar, Rawat*) 9,140 in Nepal (1961 census), possibly only a few hundred in Nepal in 1991; 2,000 to 3,000 in India (1991). Mahakali Zone, Darchula District, far western, and 2 or 3 resettlement villages in the Nepal lowlands.

TB45. YAKHA (*Yakhaba, Dewansala*) 8,000-10,000 (W. Winter 1991). Tehrathum Sankhuwasawa Dhankuta Districts, Koshi Zone. Also British Gurkhas in Sikkim, India.

TB46. THAKALI 7,113 (1991 census). Dhaulagiri Zone, Mustang District, Thak Khola, the mid Kali Gandaki Valley, with Annapurna Himal on one side and Dhaulagiri Himal on the other. 39% people (45% men and 33% women) have proficiency in Nepali.

TB47. BAHING (*Rumdali, Baing, Bayung, Bahing lo*) 7,000-10,000 (Winter 1991). Sagarmatha Zone, Okhaldunga District; Eastern Himalayas. Dialects: Namber Sacha, Rokhung, Khaling, Banenge, Dobo lo, and Proca lo.

TB48. LORUNG, NORTHERN (*Lohorong*, or sometimes, *Khanawa* was added) 7,000 to 10,000 (W. Winter 1991). Between the middle Arun Valley and the Sabhakhola, middle Sankhuwasawa District, Koshi Zone. Dialect: Biksit. A Rai group language.

TB49. KHAM, SHESHI 7,500 (1988). Western hills, Rukum and Rolpa districts, Rapti Zone. 55% lexical similarity with Gamale Kham (closest), 51% with Takale, 46% with Bhujel, 45% with Maikoti-Hukam, 44% with Nisi. Below 5% literate.

TB50. CHOURASE (Three alternate names: *Umbule, Ambule, Ombule*) 5,000 or more (W. Winter 1991). Udayapur and Okhaldhunga districts. Mutually intelligible dialects: Bonu, Ubu but closest to Jerung.

TB51. DOLPO 5,000 (1985-figure). Dolpa, northern, Karnali Zone.

TB52. CHANTEL 3,000 to 5,000 (1985-figures). Myagdi District, Dhawalagiri Zone, Kali Gandaki River valley. Call themselves Magar, but are closer to Kham or Thakali.

3.3. Austro-Asiatic Languages (AA):

AA53. SANTALI (*Hor, Satar, Santhiali*) 40,000 in Nepal (1985); 100,000 in Bangladesh (UBS 1983); 5,675,000 in India (IMA 1994). Jhapa and Koshi zones, Morang District. The speakers show some degree of bilingualism in Maithili and Nepali.

AA54. MUNDARI (*Horo, Munda, Mandari, Munari, Colh*) 5,700 in Nepal (Johnstone 1993); 1,467,515 in India (IMA 1994); Also in Bangladesh. Dialects: Hasada, Latar, Naguri, and Kera. Not much of bilingualism is reported.

4. Nepal: The Endangered Languages

There are are a large number of languages which are surely going to be unheard of in a few decades from now – because of a benign neglect to promote their cases, or because the sheer arithmetic is against them. For instance, the following four Indo-Aryan Languages are surely on their way out:

IA55. PALPA (*Pahari-Palpa*) 3,002 (1961 census). Western, town of Palpa. Unclassified. Palpa stands midway between Nepali and Kumauni.

IA56. DARAI 3,000 (SIL 1973). Inner Terai, Narayani Zone, Chitawan District. Typological affinities with Northwestern Dardic group.

IA57. MAITHILI, DEHATI (*Dehati, Deshiya*) Exact figures unknown; Spoken in some districts of south Nepal Dialect: Nuniya. Significantly different from Standard Maithili.

IA58. HINDI 2,867 in Nepal (1961 census); large number of speakers in India. Southern strip of low country.

To add to the above list, there are many minor Tibeto-Burman languages. Yamphe, sometimes also called Yakkha or Yamphu still has some speakers and two dialects, Sibao-Yamphe and Pa-o, but is a scattered speech on high mountain slopes – in Makalu Panchayat, both sides of the upper Arun River, northern Sankhuwasawa. To the south, the Jaljale Himal east of the Arun and the Apsuwakhola west of the Arun; to the north as far as the Leksuwakhola and Barun rivers. Fortunately, it is still spoken by younger generation. The same is the case with Puma which is retained mainly by the young on the Northwestern slopes of the Rapcha Range from the highest peaks to the Shwahkola Valley, directly south of the Khotang Bajar. Some other languages are truly widespread – Sangpang has the area from Dingla, Bhojpur District in the northeast to Kharpa in the southwest. Dialects include Tana, Halumbung, Samarung, Bhalu, Tongeccha, Phali, Khartamche, and Khotang. Therefore, the number is dwindling more and more. But ones like Dumi is spoken mainly by older people, whereas young people appear to not speak, say, Jerung.

Nubri speakers have minimal bilingualism in Nepali and Tibetan. Women from Prok marry men from Nubri area primarily and some from Kutang area. Most villages have primary schools which is contributing to language loss in a big way. It has Sama, Lho, NamrunG, Prok as dialects but there exists 78% to 93% lexical similarity among dialects. Some like, Northern Ghale have many dialects: Khorla, Uiya, Jagat, Philim, Nyak, but they have 73% to 89% lexical similarity with each other, Nyak being the most diverse. Philim people have 94% intelligibility of Uiya. Speakers have 75% to 79% intelligibility of Barpak in Southern Ghale. Only the Philim know some Nepali.

In comparison, Kham, Nisi shows limited bilingualism in Nepali and the language use is vigorous, even though the literacy rate (below 5%) is very low. Dzonkha figures for Nepal are unknown, but there are some in Kathmandu, and also in Bhutan. Languages like Lhomi, spoken in the eastern hills, near the Arun River, in about 6 villages, and a few in Kathmandu. But the dialect may be different across the Tibet border. Lhomi shows 69% lexical similarity with Baragaunle and Dolpo; 68% with Lopa; and 65% with Lhasa Tibetan and Kyerung. Tamang is the largest Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nepal – spoken in the North Gorkha District,

Gandaki Zone, south and east of Jagat, but the Eastern Gorkha Tamang, with its dialects Kasigaon, Kerounja, appears to be distinct from all other Tamang. Speakers refer to themselves as Gurung, but recognize that their language is different. These dialects have 81% lexical similarity with each other. Tichurong, too, is close to Dolpa Tibetan, but is a separate language. About languages like Vayu, Hodgson had said it was becoming extinct in the mid-19th century, but it has survived until the end of the 20th century (Michailovsky 1988). Now there being no monolingual children, Vayu has strong Nepali influences in phonology, lexicon, and grammar (J. Matisoff 1991). On the other hand, many younger generation Lepcha speak Nepali as their mother tongue. It is still alive in Sikkim where it is used in some schools. Interestingly, Ghale, Kutang speakers in Bihi village have minimal bilingual proficiency in Tibetan and Nepali. They call their language 'thieves language'. No schools beyond primary level. Some have shifted completely. All Baraamu speakers use Nepali as second language. Similarly, some Koi speak only Nepali. Most surviving Chhintang speakers are older, as others have shifted to Bantawa or Nepali.

Here are these 43 Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal:

- TB59. YAMPHE** (*Yamphu, Newahang Yamphe*) 3,000 to 5,000 (Winter 1991). **TB60. KHAM, NISI** (*Nisi, Nisel, Nishel Kham*) 3,000 (1988). Western hills, Rukum and Rolpa districts, Rapti Zone. Dialect: Bhujel Kham.
- TB61. DZONGKHA** (*Drukke, Jonkha, Lhoke, Lhoskad, Hloka; also called Bhutanese*) 5,100 to 8,500 in all countries (1977 Voegelin and Voegelin).
- TB62. SANGPANG** (*Sampang Rai/Kha/Gun*) 5,000-7,000 (Winter 1991).
- TB63. JIREL** (*Ziral, Jiri*) 5,000 ('85) Dolakha, Jiri & Sikri valleys. 15-25% lit.
- TB64. LHOMI** (*Lhoket, Shing Saapa, Kath Bhoté, Kar Bhoté*) 4,000 in Nepal; 1,000 in India; 1,000 in China (1985); 5% to 25% men are literate.
- TB65. MANANGBA** (*Manangi*), also called *Northern Gurung*) 4,000 (J. Landon 1977). Manang District, Gandaki Zone, northern.
- TB66. MUGU** (*Mugali*) 3,500 (1996). Mugu District, Karnali Zone. Dialect: Mugali Kham which has 90% intelligibility with Mugu. Close to Humla Bhotia.
- TB67. NUBRI** (*Kutang Bhotia, Larkye*) 3,200 (1992). North Gorkha Dt, Gandaki Zone; Literacy less than 10%.
- TB68. DUNGALI** (*Dungmali Puk/Bantawa*) 3,000-5,000 (Winter 1991); 232,264 all Rai ('71). East-central Bhojpur, Singtang; Dialect: Khesang/ 'Kiranti'.
- TB69. LORUNG, SOUTHERN** (*Lohrung Kha/Khate, Yakkhaba Lorung*) 3,000 to 5,000 (Winter 1991). Dhankuta, Tamorkhola. Incorrectly called 'Yakkha'.
- TB70. TAMANG, EASTERN GORKHA** 3,000 to 4,000 (1992). 904,456 all Tamang (1991 census). A few primary schools. Below 10% literate.
- TB71. PUMA** (*Puma Pima*) 3,000 (W. Winter 1991). Still spoken by young.
- TB72. KHAM, MAIKOTI** 2,500 (1993). Western hills, Rukum/Rolpa dt, 5% lit.
- TB73. TSUM** (*tsumge*) 2,200 to 3,500 (1980). North Gorkha Dt, Gandaki Zone, Literacy less than 10%.
- TB74. MEOHANG, WESTERN** (*Newang, Newange Rai/Jimi, Mewahang*) 2,000 to 5,000 (Winter). Sankhuwasawa Dt, Koshi Zone; Many use Kulung as L2.
- TB75. GHARTI** (*Bujhel, Western Chepang*) 2,000 to 3,000 (1991). Tanahun, south of Chimkesori Peak, behind Yangchok; Culturally similar to Chepang.
- TB76. GHALE, NORTHERN** 2,500 (1991). Gandaki Zone, Gorkha District, central hills; Laprak north, south of Macha Khola. Uiya and Philim are centers.
- TB77. ATHPARIYA** (*Athapre, Athpare*) 2,000 in Nepal (Karen Ebert 1995); 232,264 all Rai (1971 census). North of Tamur; Low bilingualism in Nepali.

- TB78. BYANGSI** 2,000. Mahakali, Dharchula Dt; Related to Rangkas/ Darmiya.
- TB79. NACHERING** (*Nacering Ra/Tùm, Mathsereng, Bangdale*) 2,000 (Winter 1991). NE Khotang Dt; Dialects: Dimali, Parali, Hedangpa, Bangdale, Kharlali.
- TB80. TICHURONG** (*Ticherong*) 1,500 (1980). Dolpa District, Karnali Zone.
- TB81. BARAGAUNLE** (*Baragaun, or Baragaon*) 1,600-2,200; spread over Kagbeni, Jharkot, and Purang (1990). Dialects are Jharkot and Kagbeni.
- TB82. RAJI** 1,514 (1954-figure). Banke-Kailali, Bheri Zone, Surkhet and Bardia districts, Seti Zone, Kailaki District. Possibly also in India.
- TB83. CHAUDANGSI** 1,500 in all countries (Voegelin and Voegelin 1977), but very few in Nepal. Mahakali Zone. Related to Rangkas, Darmiya, Byangsi.
- TB84. VAYU** (*Hayu, Wayo*) 1,500 (1974). Janakpur Zone, Ramechhap and Sindhuli Garhi districts. Different than Chepang.
- TB85. LEPCHA** (*Rong, Rongke, Lapche, Rongpa, Nunpa*) 1,272 in Nepal (1961 census); 36,436 in India (1994 IMA); 24,200 in Bhutan. Ilam District, Mechi Zone. Main dialects include Ilammu, Tamsangmu, and Rengjongmu.
- TB86. DUMI** 1,000 to 2,000 (Winter 1991). Northern Khotang District, hills of the Rawakhola Valley. Dialects: Brasmi, KharbarI, Lamdija, Makpa.
- TB87. JERUNG** (*Jero, Jerum, Jerunge, Jero Mala*) 1,000-2,000 (Winter 1991). Around Melungkhola River. Dialects: Madhavpur, Balkhu-Sisneri, Ratnawati.
- TB88. GHALE, KUTANG** (*Bhotte*) 1,300 (1992). Gandaki Zone, Northern Gorkha Dt, from Nyak, upto Prok; Dialects: Bihi, Chak, Rana. 5% literacy.
- TB89. LUMBA-YAKKHA** (*Yakhaba Cea*) 1,000 (1991). North Dhankuta Dt.
- TB90. TILUNG** (*Tiling, or Tilung Blama*) 1,000 or fewer (W. Winter 1991). Halesidanda Range, Khotang Dt;. Dialects: Choskule and Dorunkecha.
- TB91. CHHULUNG** (*Chhulung Rung, Chholung, Chhilling*) 1,000 or fewer (Winter 1991). Ankhisalla, Dhankuta Dt; Most know some Nepali.
- TB92. BODO** (*Boroni, Mechi*) 938 (1961); 600,000 India ('91). Mechi, Jhapa
- TB93. KAGATE** (*Sh(y)uba*) 800-1,000 (1985) Janakpur Zone, Ramechhap Dt.
- TB94. BELHARIYA** (Also *Athpariya*) 500 (Ebert 1995). Dhankuta Dt.
- TB95. NAAPA** (*Nawa Sherpa*) 500 (1985). Sankhuwasawa Dt, Koshi Zone.
- TB96. BARAAMU** (*Barhamu, Bhramu*) 300-400 (1991). North Gorkha District.
- TB97. LAMBICHHONG** (wrongly identified as '*Mugali*' or '*Yakkha*') 500 (1991 Winter). Eastern bank of the Arun River. Ethnically related to the Bantawa.
- TB98. KOI** (*Kohi, Koi Bo'o*) 200-300 (Winter 1991) Sagarmatha, S. Khotang Dt.
- TB99. RAUTE** 200 (1985). Achham Dt, Seti Zone; Surkhet Dt. Nomadic.
- TB100. CHHINTANG** (*Teli, Chintang Rung*) 100 or fewer (Winter 1991). Lower Arun region, Dhankuta Dt.
- TB101. DARMIYA** 1,750 in all countries (Voegelin and Voegelin 1977), figures for Nepal unknown. Mahakali zone, far western. Also in India.

5. Nepal: Nearly Extinct Languages

Under this section, we merely enlist those 23 languages, mostly Tibeto-Burman speech varieties, and only one being Dravidian, which are almost extinct. Their disappearance is only a matter of time. For many, there are no speakers now. And, for instance, for Kusunda, the last speaker died in 1985. Here are the names:

Lg Fam	Names	Regional spread	Elsewhere	Remarks
IA102	Musasa (Musahar)	Sindhuli Garhi, Morang, Koshi Dolakha, Janakpur	Jharkhand, India	Nepal figures Unknown
IA103	Kevort	Koshi Zone, Morang	Rajbanshi	-do-

		District, Dakuwa Danga	area	
IA104	Kumauni	Mahakali zone	2 m in India	-do-
IA105	Kumhali	Nawalpur, Gorkha District, Gandaki Zone		-do-; partly bilingual
TB106	Chhathar	Koshi zone; Dhankuta dt		-do-
TB107	Chukwa	Kulung; Bhojpur dt		100 or less
TB108	Humla Bhotia	Bajura Dt, Seti Zone; Humla & Karnali area		-do-; low lit. Tibetan
TB109	Nar Phu	Gandaki Zone, Manang Dt		-do-
TB110	Kaike Tarali- Kham	Dhawalagiri Zone, Dolpa District, Karnali		Small no
TB111	Rangkas	Mahakali; far western	600 in India	Small
TB112	Kyerung <i>Kyirong, Gyirong</i>	Mainly Kathmandu; also Rasuwa, Langtang Birdim, Thangjet, etc.	In Tibet, China	Exact fig unknown
TB113	Panchgaunle	Mustang; Dhawalgiri		-do-
TB114	Phangduwali	Chankuta Dt, Pakhribas		-do-
TB115	Yamphu	Eastern hills, Upper Arun valley, Lorung		-do-
TB116	Thudam Bhote	Mechi zone; Taplejung dt		-do-
TB117	Tseku	Mechi zone, far-east	Tibet/Bhutan	Few
TB118	Meohang, E. <i>Newang, Newahang Jimi</i>	Sankhuwasawa District, Koshi Zone, upper Arun Valley		May be extinct
TB119	Saam	Southern Ilam Dt; Dialect Bungla/Sambya		A few elders use
TB120	Lingkhim	Ilam District, Sumbek		Extinct
TB121	Pongyong	Ilam District, Kannyam		Extinct
TB122	Waling	Khairang; Bhojpur dt.		Extinct
TB123	Kusanda	Tanahun, Chepetar, Gandaki, Ambhu		Extinct

The only Dravidian language seems to be the **Nepali Kurux** (let us number it as D124), also called *Dhangar, Jhanger, Janghard, Uraon, Orau, Oraon*, of which the exact number of speakers is unknown. But it is supposed to be spoken in the Eastern Terai, Janakpur Zone, Dhanusa District. People use alternate names but this one is surely distinct from Kurux of India and Bangladesh. It is almost extinct. Although Bista (1987: 138 and 146) is of the opinion that this group as well as speakers of Santali and Mundari migrated to Nepal in the recent times, linguistic evidence does not seem to corroborate with that.

6. The Pattern and Problems of Education

Let us look at how decisions are taken in managing as to what kind of education does one get in an educational institution in multi-ethnic and pluri-lingual Nepal. Apart from the problems that are bound to arise from non-representation of so many potential media of instructions from among the major languages of Nepal, the other important points to note are that the education system in Nepal suffers from poor facilities, inadequate teacher training, and far too academic and often irrelevant subjects or emphases. The curriculum, although it has greatly improved by end-eighties, remains insufficient (WB,1991: 80). Further, the poor, in Nepal, often lack opportunities for education in their communities, areas and in languages they know best. They lag behind the others in all aspects of school enrolment, and the disparity goes on increasing at each higher level. More pathetic is the condition of the rural poor, especially the women, who are generally barred from education since they are so often kept at home in order to perform household chores, such as fetching drinking water and collecting wood for fuel and collecting fodder. The expense involved in educating a child in Nepal is prohibitively costly for most poor rural families. Therefore, the price of an education is a major discouraging factor for most of the poor in Nepal.

6.1. The Scenario of Higher Education

As is the practice in most South Asian nations, the national body responsible for education planning is the Ministry of Education at Kathmandu, Nepal. Currently, the seats of higher learning are limited to a handful of universities, namely, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, Pokhara University, Purbanchal University, and Mahendra Sanskrit University, besides the B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences. There are five institutes under Tribhuvan University (Medicine, Engineering, Science, Agriculture and Forestry), four research centres, four faculties (Humanities and Social Science, Management, Law, and Education), as well as 61 constituent and 140 affiliated campuses.ⁱ Thus, on the higher education front, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Nepal mainly coordinates and disburses the financial grants to all the universities, thereby assisting the government in managing the fiscal aspects and funding policies of higher education – rather than acting as either think-tank for the government or as an instrument of implementation of major reforms. The universities and colleges are managed by their respective Senate/Governing or Management Councils consisting of the Chancellor (often only titular head), Pro-chancellor, Vice-chancellor (or Principal, in case of colleges), Rector, Registrar, and senate members representing various academic, economic, political, private, social and student groups. Bringing in major changes at these levels will, therefore, require convincing not one but many groups. The structure is unlike most universities/colleges in the other countries where academics and academic planners enjoy relatively high degree of freedom in introducing major changes in programs, pattern, syllabi, testing and approach.

The School Leaving Certificate is essential for a Bachelor level programme, but often a Proficiency Certificate/Intermediate Certificate is required to be taken for 2 years. There are no organized distance education institutions for higher studies in Nepal, although one could study and appear in examinations as a private candidate. Other forms of non-formal higher studies include technical training provided by ministries and government departments in fields such as Telecommunications, Civil Aviation, Surveying and Tourism and Hotel Management. The regular Bachelor's Degree courses in the University last between three and five-and-a-half years. In subjects such as Agriculture and Engineering studies last for four years and in Medicine and Surgery and Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry they last for five-and-a-half years. The Master's Degree may be taken after a further two to three years' study and the PG Diplomas take one to two years.

6.2. School Education

The school education is divided into four levels: Primary (5 years, 6-11 age-group), Lower Secondary (2 years, 11-13 age-group), Upper Secondary (3 years, 13-16 age-group), and Higher Secondary levels (2 years for 16-18 year-old). The media of instruction as is the practice accommodate only Nepali and English.

At the school level, we find that the 'Public or government-aided schools are managed by School Management Committees (SMCs), constituted according to education regulations of the Ministry of Education.' (CERID)³ where the Head-masters or Head-Mistresses are Member Secretaries of SMCs which carries the burden of ensuring people's participation and is also engaged in mobilizing resources. The SMCs of Technical and Vocational Schools are nominated by the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), where the members of SMCs are from the local intelligentsia. The issues of inefficiency and inequity in financing education are also evident in Nepal, as a 1992-NEC report shows that with slow economic growth (about 2.2% during 1985-1994), Nepal is finding meeting the educational needs of her people a major problem, in terms of both quantity and quality. Added to this are the problems low administrative efficiency and limited relevance of education to daily life of an average citizen.

6.3. Teacher Education

Training of primary/basic school teachers (with at least school leaving certificates) are conducted by the Faculty of Education of Tribhuvan University on behalf of the Ministry. There is also a radio education teacher training programme. The university also offers a 2-year long certificate programme in training of secondary school teachers plus a 3-year and one-

year B.Ed programme. The Ministry of Education also runs non-formal secondary teacher training programmes to train Science, Mathematics and English teachers. As for vocational/technical education, the pre-higher education level technical and vocational education programmes at Tribhuvan University are to be phased out from the University to institutions under the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT). University has already phased out one-year and two-year courses in para-medical areas to institutions under CTEVT.

The biggest problem before teacher education in Nepal is that by 1993-statistics, 52% to 66% of school-teachers at various levels are not yet trained. Consider the following table from *Educational Statistics of Nepal (1993)*:

Levels	Number	Number	Number	& of
	Total	Trained	Untrained	Untrained
Primary level	79,590	38,536	41,054	52.00
Lower Secondary level	13,647	04,623	09,024	66.00
Secondary level	12,656	05,512	07,144	56.00

The majority of untrained teachers cannot cope up with the complex class-room situations where students speaking different languages are expected to attend classes together. Malla (1977: 15) quotes McCafferty (1969) as saying: “On average, an untrained primary teacher will get five out of six English patterns wrong, and a secondary teacher will get two out of three wrong”. As a consequence, there are large failure rates year after year in the SLC examinations. Malla (1978:2) himself observes: “...if failure rates at the SLC examinations are any reliable indicators, the rates are not only high but disturbingly high because 80% to 90% fail SLC examination because they fail in English”.

6.3. Problem Areas

The problems faced by the current pattern of school education seem to be typical of several other multi-ethnic and multi-lingual developing countries, besides there being a general problem of lack of quality school education:

- Children in government schools suffer because of the poor quality of teachers,
- But private-run schools cost at least 15 times more than the tuition fee of state schools,
- Text-books upto Grade III are free but higher class books imported from India are prohibitively expensive,

- No decision universalise access to primary education (CERID report),
- Only 39% children enrolled in grade I complete the primary education cycle,
- The adult literacy levels are just 36.72 percent, the lowest in South Asia (NHDR report),
- Girls comprise two-thirds of all children of school-going age not attending classes,
- According to a recent study, prepared by the Ministry of Education, nearly 1 million children of school-going age are still out of the school system.

7. Education Reforms

In an editorial page write-up in *The Kathmandu Post* (Falgun 13, 2057) on what needs to be done urgently to bring in major reforms in the education scene of Nepal, Angur Baba Joshi (2001) had first spoken in detail on what Nepal needs to do in the area of education reform. He favoured prioritising 'Agriculture, tourism, proper manpower development, women's empowerment, water resource development and afforestation'. These he thought could be best done through Village Development Committees, District Development Committees, NGOs and the concerned ministries. He specifically suggested that one must lay stress on *Yoga* and meditation for which one needs to create an institutional mechanism, introduce what is usually called value-based educationⁱⁱ, because he thought these were "the main reason for the problems and difficulties that are noticeable at present in the speedy and sustainable development of the country, and the question of rampant corruption, lack of commitment and stress, strain and restlessness of all levels". Notice, however, that the twin-problems that dog all developing nations, namely, that of handling multi-culturalism and deciding on medium of instruction have been carefully avoided here. Also, seemingly insurmountable problem of tackling illiteracy has not even been mentioned in many such suggestions on educational reform.

As one instance of a typical malady, consider the *Spotlight* (The National Newsmagazine), 19.33 (March 3-9, 2000) news item called 'Crisis in the Making' where it is reported that although the government wants to abrogate the SLC exams and introduce the HSEB board examinations, the mismanagement of high school education is evident from 1999 results of HSEB which shows that even in the Kathmandu valley, less than 25% students passed. This and inability to maintain time schedule have dealt a set-back to 74,000 students enrolled in HSEB. This happened just when Nepalese parents were gaining confidence about the country's higher secondary education. Apart from its present crisis, the HSEB has also failed to monitor the ten plus two schools. Many such schools in Kathmandu

valley itself are found employing under-qualified teachers and maintaining less than adequate space.

As a part of the World Bank's International Development Agency, the Danish DANIDA, the Japan Grant Fund and others had launched a Basic and Primary Education project in 1993 and pumped in about 100 million dollars. In 5 years, the five-year project covered 40 out of 75 districts of Nepal but the second phase could not begin in April 2001, because contrary to what the Education Ministry had claimed (namely, 12,190 classrooms constructed, 5,800 classrooms rehabilitated, and opening up of 261 teacher resource centres across the country), the donor countries have been apprehensive that the grant would be a waste, as the resource centres, set up to train and monitor the teaching of nearly 85,000 primary school teachers around the country, have not been very effective, as stated by Suman Pradhan in Inter-Press Service World News (see www.ips.org) dated August 3, 2001, quoting a Nepal Human Development Report (NHDR). The World Bank project's (for \$ 30.6 million, approved 21st April, 1992 and closed by the end of 1999) main objectives were to: (i) improve the quality of primary education; (ii) increase equitable access to primary schooling; and (iii) strengthen the management of the formal and non-formal primary education delivery system. The project consists of three components. The first component, designed to increase the quality of primary education, will: (a) simplify the primary school curriculum and make it more relevant; (b) provide improved teacher instructional materials, textbooks and supplementary materials; and (c) institutionalize a teacher supervision, support and training system. The second component, designed to improve access to educational resources, will: (a) strengthen the non-formal primary education and literacy programs; (b) offer an increased opportunity to receive a basic education to girls, the very poor, and those in remote areas; and (c) construct and/or renovate primary school classrooms to accommodate the increase in enrollment. The third component, designed to improve the institutional development of the subsector, will: (a) strengthen the Ministry of Education's capacity to plan, manage and monitor its formal and non-formal primary education program; (b) assist in the development of its capacity to coordinate and manage donor-aided projects; and (c) improve the design of efficient classroom facilities.

Following from the above project which ended by December 1999, we come across a fresh news item which reports with a date-line of April 1, 1999 that the World Bank announced a US\$12.5 million credit to support Nepal's Basic and Primary Education Programme for another 10 years. The aims include providing greater control to communities to manage schools, and allocation of resources to districts based on the assessed needs of the rural schools and of targeted under-served groups which are expected to extend the basic cycle from five to eight years. This was the first in a series of adaptable program loans totalling up to US\$50 million that the Bank plans to provide over the next ten years to support Nepal's education reforms.

Under this scheme, the Basic and Primary Education Programme will focus on (a) strengthening institutional capacity at national, district and

school levels, (b) delivering more efficient and better quality basic and primary education services and (c) raising learning achievement and increasing equitable access, especially for girls and under-served communities. The World Bank and four other donors (Danida, The European Union, Finland and Norway) will contribute a final total of US\$106 million to the project. The expected increase in access to basic and primary education under the programme, combined with higher completion rates resulting from quality improvement, they hope would result in a 10 percent increase in net enrollment over the programme period. The programme is expected to help poorer and socially disadvantaged students in particular by providing subsidies for textbooks and school supplies, locating schools in under-served areas and offering optional time-tabling. The programme's aim at broadening access to school and increasing completion rates hope to benefit children from poorer communities who do not attend schools for various reasons are school-drop-outs.

8. *Constitutional Provisions and Languages of Nepal*

Let us take a close look at the Constitutional provisions that have been made in the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*, 1990 which has been a much modified version of the earlier Constitutions – fifth since 1948, other landmark documents dating to 1951, 1959 and 1962. The new Constitution came into force on Friday the twenty-third day of the month of Kartik of the year 2047 Bikram Sambat (November 9, 1990). All comments as well as quotations are based on the official translation as published in the *Himalayan Research Bulletin*, Vol. XI, Nos. 1-3, 1991.⁴

As is well known to connoisseurs of Nepalese politics, the Schedule 2⁵ relating to Article 7 (1), give us the National Anthem where we find the prayer for eternal prosperity of Nepal and long life of her monarch (“...SARKAR MAHARAJADHIRAJAKO SADA RAHOS UNNATI RAKHUN CHIRAYU EESHALE...”), and also a wish – as I the words: “...BAIRI SARA HARAUN SHANT HOUN SABAI BIGHNA VYATHA...” literally meaning, “Let all enmities be removed, and let all obstacles and pains come to an end” (Trans: UNS). Considering what has happened in the recent times, these seem to have been betrayed as we have seen an unfortunate and painful end of an era that has given these democratic values to this Himalayan country.

Right in the Preamble of the 1990-Constitution, there is a declaration that “source of sovereign authority of the independent and sovereign Nepal is inherent in the people...”, and an unhesitant admission of people’s desire for the changes that have come over in course of time as can be seen the following words: “...in keeping with the desire of the Nepalese people⁶ expressed through the recent people's movement to bring about constitutional changes, we are further inspired by the objective of securing to the Nepalese people social, political and economic justice long into the future” (Preamble to *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*, 9 Nov 1990 Act No. 2047). That the Constitution has been created “with the widest possible participation of the Nepalese people...” in order “to guarantee basic human

rights to every citizen of Nepal; and also to consolidate Adult Franchise, the Parliamentary System of Government, Constitutional Monarchy and the System of Multi-Party Democracy by promoting amongst the people of Nepal the spirit of fraternity and the bond of unity on the basis of liberty and equality...” (Preamble, *ibid.*) only reassures that the lingua-ethnic minorities have nothing to fear here. This fact is re-emphasized in *Part 1* Preliminary, under Article 2 which defines ‘The Nation’ as in the following words: “...united by a bond of allegiance to national independence and integrity of Nepal, the Nepalese people irrespective of religion, race, caste or tribe...” – where the word *language* may be missing unlike in the Indian Constitution but which has found place in the Article 4.1 ‘The Kingdom’: “Nepal is a multiethnic, **multilingual**, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom.” As it has been observed by [Dr. Karl-Heinz Krämer](#), although “One of the constitutional features most restricting for social development has been the concession towards conservative forces in the definition of the kingdom (*adhirajya*) in Article 4. New are the terms multiethnic, multilingual and democratic.” The expression ‘*Secularism*’ has been, however, carefully avoided.

Finally, *language* appears in **Article 6** ‘Language of the Nation’ which goes like this: “(1) The Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the language of the nation of Nepal. The Nepali language shall be the official language. (2) All the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal.” (*ibid.*). Interestingly, it re-surfaces in Article 9 which deals with Acquisition of citizenship where one of the four conditions is that one must be able to “speak and write the language of the nation of Nepal”. But in the **Part 3**, under Article 11 where Fundamental Rights, especially Right to Equality is detailed, there is an announcement that there shall be “no discrimination ... on grounds of religion (dharma), race (varya), sex (linga), caste (jât), tribe (jâti) or ideological conviction (vaicârik) or any of these”, but notice that ‘language (bhâsâ)’ is missing here once again. There is talk about ‘... protection and advancement of the ... socially or educationally backward’ and yet no mention of language. Under Article 12, i.e. ‘Right to Freedom’, we get to see in the list, ‘freedom of opinion and expression’ or under Article 13 ‘Press and Publication Right’, but these only make oblique reference to *language(s)* which have been pushed into Article 18, under ‘Cultural and Educational Right’ which is worth quoting here:

Article 18 Cultural and Educational Right

1. Each community residing within the Kingdom of Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script and culture.
2. Each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children.

The Directive Principles and Policies of the State given under **Part 4, Article 25** assure that “It shall be the chief objective of the State to promote conditions of welfare on the basis of the principles of an open society, by establishing a just system in all aspects of national life, including social, economic and political life, while at the same time protecting the lives, property and liberty of the people...” (ibid). But, apart from Articles 6 and 18, the most important directive comes from Article 26 (2): “) The State shall, while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country, pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity by promoting healthy and cordial social relations amongst the various religions, castes, tribes, communities and **linguistic groups**, and by helping in the promotion of their languages, literatures, scripts, arts and cultures.” (ibid). Article 26 (3) also states that “The State shall pursue a policy of mobilising the natural resources and heritage of the country in a manner which might be useful and beneficial to the interest of the nation” where I would like to underscore the word heritage. Read with Article 26 (7) to (26 (9)), where the word *education* is used again and again in the context of minorities, women and children and physically challenged persons, I assume that the *medium of education* and instruction is implied⁷. The remaining parts of the 1990-Constitution (until Article 133) seem once again peripheral to our discussion.

9.Planning Options

At a lecture before the Royal Education Commission, Nepal on 22nd September, 1997, I had pointed out that Nepal is a heterogeneous country – linguistically (recorded at one time as housing 52 languages, cf. 1961 census – but official mention listed between 17 [‘71] – 18 [1981] and 36 [1961] languages) as well as socio-culturally (Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman and Austric- presence of these three and claims of Dravidian influence too, esp. in respect of Newari). Even 1991 fig’s list 32 languages.

Therefore, heterogeneity cannot be wished away, nor can it be overlooked

1. Nepal is a classic case of emergence as an entity through in-migration.

Both Aryans (mostly Hindus) and Indo-Mongoloids came from across the borders. Brahmin-Chhetri-Kami-Damai-Newars on the one hand and Magars-Rais-Limbus-Thakalis-Sherpas on the other hand-both of whom have, in course of several centuries, got integrated with an indigenous tradition and also enriched it – area case in point.

A look at the relative figures of land distribution among Mountains – Hills – Terai (35:42:23) and population density per sq km (25:117:193) show where there had been more migration.

2. Although geographically so much of Nepal is inaccessible, and in terms of communicability it is highly unviable (with only 53 kms of rail road, 3533 kms of motorable road and a limited air service-31,173 tickets domestic-meant only for the affluent), but for various reasons – there have been a series of within the country population movements.

Otherwise, it is difficult to explain how there had been 184 % increase of 'Nepali' returns in 1981 census (compared to 1971 – figures). The decadal increase was 45 % for Nepali – high enough if looked at in the light of 26.6 % av. population growth figures (25 % increase in the hills and 18 % in the mountains in the same period). There surely has been a change of language loyalty for certain groups of people in the Terai. But that still does not explain the surge. In any case, the Nepalese people from the hills and mountains have been traditionally known for migrating to the plains for livelihood. The fact is that 91 % are employed in the agricultural sector, although land is cultivable. This kind of employment figure is possible only if there have been mass exodus of agricultural labours from the mountains and hills.

Between 1952/54 and 1961, we suddenly find a 3,434.48 % increase in the Bhojpuri and 275.84 % in the Maithili population, the only explanation of which was massive influx of Bihari labour force during that period.

Consequently, there have been historical reasons for a tremendous increase in language contacts – and hence, in bi-linguality.

3. Along with migration and movement (within the country) shift of language loyalty is evident in the following comparative figures (abstracted from K.P.Malla's work and from the census data). Here we find rate of increase/ decrease in mother-tongue returns:

	BASE YR: 1952-54 (abs. no. of sp.)	1961	1971	1981	1991
Nepali	40,13,367 (48.7% of	+ 19.5 % (51.0%)	+ 26.36 (52.4%)	+ 44.7 (58.4%)	+ 6.11 % (50.31%)

	total people)				
Maithili	3,00,768 (3.65%)	+275.8% (12.0%)	+ 17.4% (11.5%)	+ 25% (11.1%)	+31.38% (11.85%)
Bhojpuri	16,335 (0.198%)	+ 3434.5% (6.1%)	+ 39.7% (6.98%)	+ 41.7% (7.61%)	+ 20.73% (7.46%)
Awadhi	----	+ 100% (4.7%)	_ 4.3% (2.7%)	_ 3.6% (1.6%)	+ 59.86% (2.03%)
Tharu	3,59,594	+ 13.2% (4.3%)	+21.9% (4.29%)	+10.04% (3.63)	+ 82.04% (5.37%)

This is meant to be only a sample; not all major languages are covered.

- By 1986-figures, although the primary education sector has 70.33% of total schools, it still has the most unfavourable student-teacher ratio (35:1 as comp. to 22:1 at the next level) and also poor teacher : trained teacher ratio (only 34%). In 1996, the sector has 20,715 out of 28,275, i.e. 73.26% of total schools with 156 students per school ; the ratio is worse – 40:1 now.

Considering the growth-rate (decadal) of 26.6 %, the figure of 18.58 lakh primary students should have become 23.41 lakh, making it more difficult to manage. The reality is worse, in 1996, they are 32.34 lakh.

If any plan has to introduce or increase (qualitatively) a bilingual education system, the challenge is quite great. In 10 yrs, primary schools increased from 12,386 to 20,715, i.e. 8529 more (i.e. only 69.99% more).

- Let us relate this with the enrolment at the Higher Education level where Humanities (38 %) Management (22%), Science & Technology (13 %) and Law (9%) still reign supreme. Although only Engineering, Medicine and Law have shown surges whereas the top three have shown decreases. It apparently looks as if mother tongues or multiple languages have no role here. But when we find boys in school to total boys of the relevant age drastically drop down from 65 % at the primary to 26% at the lower secondary and to 19% at the higher secondary levels, we find that very few are able to stick to the system. I don't expect that 1996 figures will change this picture drastically.

Add to the above, the failure-rate in English in the schools or in the school-leaving examinations completes the story which these figures can't tell.

In fact, if we look at the annual rate of growth of student-population between 1991-96 at three different levels (3.03% primary ; 3.66 lower secondary ; and 3.42 % higher secondary) and compare with the annual population-growth rate (2.66%), the picture is clearer.

6. If we consider the language diversity profile, the extent of challenge can be determined:

<u>Language names</u>	<u>In Lakhs: (rounded)</u>	
	1981	1991
Nepali	87.67	93.03
Maithili	16.68	21.92
Bhojpuri	11.43	13.80
Newari	4.49	6.90
Gurung	1.74	2.28
Tamang	5.22	9.04
Awadhi	2.34	3.75
Tharu	5.46	9.93
Magar	2.13	4.30
Limbu	1.29	2.54
Rai/Kiranti	2.21	4.39

7. According to 1981-census, the above 11 were the only major languages (as they were spoken by above 1 lakh people). However, according to that criteria, now the following too will have to be included

Sherpa	1.22
Hindi	1.71
Urdu	2.02

The surge in the Urdu-figures will probably have to do with rise in the muslim consciousness after the 1990-incidents in India.

8. It is the diversity of minor/minority languages of Nepal which the education-planners will have to consider carefully; their names given here follow the order of more speakers to less speakers:

Rajbansi	85,558
Bengali	27,712
Danuwar	23,721
Satar	25,302
Chepang	25,097
Marwadi	16,514
Jhangar	15,175
Dhimal	15,014
Thami	14,400
Majhi	11,322
Santhal	8,030
Thakali	7,113
Darai	6,520
Jirel	4,229
Raji	2,959
Kumhale	1,413
Byanshi	1,314

These are only 1991-Figures, given in true number (no. in lakhs). In addition, there are 2784 speakers of English, 8309 other foreign languages, and 9157 unstated returns plus a whopping 4.96 lakh speakers of 'Other local languages'.

9. Lastly, the most important fact is the constitutional provision, namely, that all children are to be given education through their mother-tongue. This last point is not open for any discussion or debate. No doubt, as it is stated, it is a political decision. But there have been enough scientific (psychological/educational) experiments, too,

showing how and why the medium of mother tongue is ideal for learners.

10. We could now consider the plan options:

- (a) Recognize all mother tongues as per the Census records.
- (b) Impart education in all mother tongues-irrespective of the opinion of the speakers of such mother tongues themselves.

(c) Highly unviable

due to - * economic reasons (cost-benefit-wise)

* reasons of practicability (literacy level, limited

functionality, identification of possible

teachers,

scattered dwelling patterns, etc)

*size of the task (gigantic ; also because the

basic

language descriptions for all being

unavailable)

*shift in language identity

- (d) The other end of this option, i.e. 'Use only Nepali' is equally unviable in today's context, because *Nepal is basically a heterogene

*It is against the language rights

*It is an anti-democratic option

*May lead to social tension and

*will surely widen the majority-minority

divide

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¹ World Higher Education Database 2000, based on International Centre on Higher Education – an organ of International Association of Universities/UNESCO; see <www.unesco.org/iau/whed-2000.html>

⁴ For anyone who wishes to look at the appropriate and latest version between 1994 and 2001, one could go to the University of Wuerzburg site at <www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/np>, and look up there or contact A. Tschentscher at the University Law department.

⁵ Schedules 1 and 3 refer to the official description of the National Flag and the details of the method of making the shapes inside the border, or on the Coat-of-Arms of Nepal, respectively. They are, therefore, not so important for Language Planners.

⁶ The most serious change was that one from a partyless to a multiparty system. A similar important change being in the decision under which King *Birendra* became a constitutional monarch.

⁷ Article 26 (7) policy of making the female population participate in ...education, health and employment. (8) safeguard the rights and interests of children and shall ensure that they are not exploited, and shall make gradual arrangements for free education. (9) education, health and social security of orphans, helpless women, the aged, the disabled and incapacitated persons....