

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

KAKALI MUKHERJEE

## I

### **BACKGROUND**

Sikkim, being the second smallest state of India with an area of 7096 square kilometre, is bounded from its north to east by China, by Bhutan from its east to south and West Bengal state of India in the south and Nepal in the west. Despite its tiny size, Sikkim is diverse in language and culture, in history, politics and in geography also.

Sikkim is the homeland of three main ethnic groups – the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese. While the Lepchas are the original inhabitants of the state, the Bhutias are the migrants from Tibet into Sikkim in seventeenth century and the Nepalese started migration into Sikkim from the beginning of the nineteenth century <sup>1</sup>. Other communities joined them later in different phases.

As per the latest Census of 2011, the population of Sikkim is 607,688 which was 540,851 in 2001 Census constituting 5.26% of the total population of India. In 2011 Census the population of Sikkim constitutes 5.02% of the total Indian population which is 1,210,193,422. Though the overall population of 2011 Census has been available by now but the linguistic population of the state is yet to be available. In absence of language wise population of Sikkim in 2011 Census, the linguistic population of Sikkim as appeared in the latest published Census of 2001 is highlighted below.

According to 2001 Census, Sikkim is majorly populated by the following linguistic groups

1. Nepali	338,606	8. Rai	8,856
2. Bhotia	41,825	9. Bengali	6,320
3. Hindi	36,072	10. Urdu	2,930
4. Lepcha	35,728	11. Tibetan	1,977

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<sup>1</sup> K.S. Singh: *People of India – SIKKIM: Vol-XXXIX, 1993, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, pp-4*

5. Limbu	34,292	12. Punjabi	1,364
6. Sherpa	13,922	13. Malayalam	1,021
7. Tamang	10,089		

and also by

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|------------|---|
| 14. Mangar | (below 10000 speakers at all India level) |
| 15. Newar  | (below 10000 speakers at all India level) |
| 16. Sunwar | (below 10000 speakers at all India level) |
| 17. Others |   |

Thus, though a small state but Sikkim is marked by linguistic diversity which has emerged from the simultaneous existence of a good number of indigenous languages namely, Nepali, Bhotia, Lepcha, Limbu, Tamang, Rai, Mangar, Sunwar, Newari, Tibetan and other languages. Among them Nepali is spoken by the largest number of people.

Along with the languages the diversity in culture is also a feature of the tiny Sikkim since its exposure to outer world. This diversity primarily, has arisen from the cultures brought in Sikkim by the immigrant communities, namely Nepalese and Bhutias. Of course, prior to migration and settlement of Nepalese and Bhutias, the Sikkim was inhabited initially by the Lepchas followed by Limbus and other communities.

## II

### ***ABOUT THE PRESENT VOLUME***

Under the ongoing *Linguistic Survey of India Project* the indigenous languages of Sikkim state have been studied for the *LSI-Sikkim (Part-I)* Volume where Nepali was excluded. And, the *LSI-Sikkim (Part-I)* Volume has presented the grammatical descriptions along with demographic, bilingual-trilingual information and sociolinguistic information of the following State specific languages, namely

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|-----------|------------|
| 1. Bhotia | 6. Rai     |
| 2. Lepcha | 7. Tibetan |
| 3. Limbu  | 8. Mangar  |
| 4. Sherpa | 9. Newar   |
| 5. Tamang | 10. Sunwar |

Of course, grammatical description of Tibetan has been shown in comparative manner with the Bhotia language of Sikkim and there is no individual chapter on Tibetan language. It was committed in the Volume that Nepali of Sikkim, being the first numerous language of the state, will be studied and presented in *LSI Sikkim Part-II*<sup>2</sup>. The volume has been released in the *website* of the Office of the Registrar General, India, in March, 2011.

Thus, the present Volume of *LSI-Sikkim (Part-II)* is exclusively concerned with Nepali language, being one of the Scheduled languages of India as well as the first populous language of Sikkim. The Volume is going to present not only the grammatical description along with demographic, bilingual-trilingual, sociolinguistic information of Nepali in Sikkim state but also the comparative grammatical features of Nepali language spoken in West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh along with the abridged reports of the both. Before the study in Sikkim the Nepali language has been studied for the *LSI-West Bengal* Volume along with other relevant state specific languages of the state. When the Volume on West Bengal would be released the full-fledged report on Nepali language, spoken in West Bengal, would be available. The Nepali language has also been a subject under *LSI-Himachal Pradesh* Volume under the consideration of the migration of Nepali speaking population in the Himalayan region in the northern part of India stretched from Himachal Pradesh to Uttar Pradesh. Studies of three varieties of Nepali reveals the form of Nepali language spoken in three different environments. When in Sikkim it is spoken amidst the Tibeto-Burman languages, in West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh it is spoken being surrounded majorly by Indo-Aryan languages and partially by Tibeto-Burman languages.

Accordingly, along with the presentation of Nepali language of Sikkim the present *LSI-Sikkim (Part-II)* attempts to present a comparative study of Nepali language spoken in West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh. This comparative picture of Nepali may be of great help to highlight the convergence and divergence in the language emerging out of its existence in mixed linguistic background.

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<sup>2</sup> *Linguistic Survey of India-Sikkim (Part-I): 2011: Office of the Registrar General, India website - [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in)*

### III

#### **BRIEF HISTORY OF NEPALI LANGUAGE**

Nepali has been included as one of the 22 Scheduled languages specified to the Constitution of India by seventy-first Amendment Act, 1992. The language is the member of the Pahari group of Inner sub branch of Indo-Aryan sub-family of Indo-European Language family. Primarily, the language spoken by the people of Nepal is the official and court language of Nepal. At the same time this is one of the state official languages of Sikkim, (located in north-eastern part of India) and also is a major language in the Darjeeling district of the West Bengal state (located in the eastern part of the country). Nepali population is also significantly distributed in Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh occupying the rank within first five major languages of the states respectively.

Under the consideration of the major concentration in Sikkim followed by West Bengal the Nepali language has been studied under the Volumes *LSI-Sikkim (Part-II)* and *LSI-West Bengal*. The study of Nepali in Himachal Pradesh state under *LSI-Himachal Pradesh* has arisen out of the fact that Nepali is considered as one of the Pahari group of languages, specifically Eastern Pahari, the existence of which group is traced to the lower regions of the Himalayan range of mountains comprising the area spreaded from Himachal Pradesh to Uttar Pradesh.

Nepali language, thus, is alternatively named as *Eastern Pahari* or *Parbatiya*, *Khaskura*, *Gorkhali*. All these names have been attested in the *Linguistic Survey of India* edited by Sir George Abraham Grierson in Independence India. According to him “ *The Pahari group of the Inner Sub-branch of the Indo-Aryan languages consists of three groups of dialects.... - the Eastern Pahari, the Central Pahari and the Western Pahari.... . Eastern Pahari is commonly called Nepali or Naipali by Europeans.... . Other names for Eastern Pahari are ‘Parbatiya’ or ‘the Hill language’, ‘Gorkhali’ or ‘the language of the Gorkhas and ‘Khaskura’ or ‘the language of ‘Khas Tribe’ ...*”.

As per literature, the ‘Khaskura’ is the oldest name of the language. The name has its own history. According to Sir Grierson,<sup>3</sup> the following is the brief about the language.

*Khas* is a tribe who populated one Aryan colony existing amidst the vast population using various indigenous Tibeto-Burman languages in Nepal. Nothing particular is known about the origin of their homeland or about their language. But it is presumed that occupying the area of lower Himalaya from Jhelum to Nepal for many centuries this Khas people abandoned their own speech in favour of the language which closely resembled the Maithili language – a language of Indo-Aryan family.

Being oppressed by Muslim invasion certain Rajputs of Mewar of Udaipur migrated to the Himalaya in the north, particularly in Garhwal, Kumaun and Western Nepal and settled there with their Gurjara relatives and the local people of Khas tribal community. Subsequently, the Gorkha town (north-west of Kathmandu) of Nepal was conquered by the people of the mixed community of Khasas and Rajputs in 1559 A.D. who has made evidence that around the year 1650 A.D. (century before the Gorkha conquered Nepal) the court language of Nepal was the same language which was used by Khasas i.e. a language akin to Maithili. In 1768 Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha Dynasty became the ruler of the entire Nepal and founded the Gorkha dynasty extending invasion upto Sikkim, particularly the lower Teesta basin – the eastern boundary of Sikkim. This invasion caused the Nepali immigration in bulk into Sikkim for years together in different phases in British India. The language used by this dynasty is named as ‘*Khas-kura*’ (the language of Khas) which is the lingua franca of the Nepal country as well as of Sikkim and which is claimed by them as a mixture of the language of Khasas and the Marwari-Mewari dialect of Rajasthani language of Udaipur. This language developed in proximity to a number of surrounding Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal and evolved as a distinct Aryan language in contrast with *Newari* which is also a language of Nepal showing Tibeto-Burman features.

With this historical background ‘*Khaskura*’ became alternatively known in Indian territory as *Gorkhali* (Language of Gorkhas), *Parbatiya* (the hill language), *Eastern Pahari* or *Naipali* and officially as *Nepali*.

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<sup>3</sup> Sir George Abraham Grierson: *The Linguistic Survey of India, 1927 (Reprint 1967) Vol-1 Part-I pp 180-181 and 1916 (Reprint 1968) Vol-IX, Part-IV pp 19-52*

## IV

### *THE TREATMENT OF NEPALI IN GRIERSON'S LINGUISTIC SURVEY OF INDIA*

Grierson has used the nomenclature *Eastern Pahari* for Nepali language. Eastern Pahari is one of the three varieties of Pahari group of languages (comprising Eastern Pahari, Central Pahari, Western Pahari) spoken in the sub-Himalayan hills extending from Bhadrawah (north of Punjab) to the eastern part of Nepal. The word 'Pahari' means of or belonging to the mountains. The Pahari language of extreme east is Khaskura or Eastern Pahari, commonly called Naipali, the Aryan language spoken in Nepal. The reference of Khas people is also traced in Sanskrit literature, as mentioned by Sir Grierson. Grierson has classified the language as the member of Pahari group of Inner sub branch of Indo-Aryan family.

Thus, Nepali has been referred by Sir Grierson in various names, namely, '*Eastern Pahari*', '*Khas-kura*', '*Naipali*', '*Parbatiya*'.(Grierson: 1927 and 1916).

## V

### *NEPALI IN PRESENT INDIA*

In present India the *Nepali* language is referred as *Nepali* only which includes the Gorkhali spaeakers also. In Sikkim the *Nepali* is the superposed variety and a prestigious as well as link language used in formal occasions, literature, education and in administration. The status of Nepali in this manner has been obtained vide Sikkim Official Language Act 1977. Act-5.No. 5/LL/77 dated 25.10.1977 which inter-alia reads "*With effect from such date as the state government may by notification in the official gazette specifying in this behalf, the Nepali, the Bhutia and the Lepcha languages shall be the languages to be used for all official purpose of the state of Sikkim.....*". Moreover, since 1992 *Nepali* has attained the status of one of the Scheduled languages of India.

According to the sociolinguistic Survey<sup>4</sup> conducted by the Office of the Registrar General, India in collaboration with Laval University, Quebec, Canada, the native speakers use the name of the language as *Gorkhali* or *Khas* or *Parbatiya*. And the name '*Nepali*' is

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<sup>4</sup> B.P. Mahapatra and others: *The Written Languages of the World – A Survey of the Degree and the Modes of Use – 2. India – Book 2. Non-Constitutional Languages* pp-813-854

used in English and in Government Documents or in the Constitution. The survey result has been published in 1989 where the sociolinguistic output of 'Gorkhali/Nepali' as non-Constitutional language has been presented in all details.

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee refers '*Khas-kura*' (called also '*Parbatiya*', '*Gorkhali*' or '*Nepali*') as the most important Pahari speech. According to him "*Indo-Aryan speakers from the plains, mostly from Rajputana, migrated north into the Himalayas among the Khasas, and hinduised them, from the early centuries of the Christian era ; and the Indo-Aryan dialects they brought completely killed off the original speech of the Khasas and became transformed into the present day Pahari dialects*".<sup>5</sup>

T.W Clark has also discussed the grammatical features of Nepali under the banner of 'Pahari' in the perspective of existence of Nepali along with the languages spoken in the hill sectors of India or the Himalayan dialects of India.<sup>6</sup>

## VI

### **THE APPEARANCE OF NEPALI IN INDIAN CENSUS**

Though the first official decennial Census was conducted in Sikkim in 1891 but the name Nepali/Naipali/Gorkhali/Khaskura/Eastern Pahari/Parbatiya did not appear in the publication. [Singh: 1993]. From 1901 onwards based on return in decennial Census Nepali is appearing in the following ways in Indian Censuses.

1901: *Eastern Pahari or Naipali*

[In Census of India 1901 Vol-I, part-I. pp-339 it has been reported that "*Eastern Pahari is the language usually known as Naipali: natives of Nepal call it Khas, i.e. 'The language of Khasas'. It is also called Gorkhali and Parbatiya*"].

1911: *Eastern Pahari or Naipali*

1921: *Eastern Pahari, Khaskura or Naipali*

1931: *Eastern Pahari, Khaskura or Naipali*

1951: *Nepali (Naipali) or Khaskura and Gorkhali* as two different languages (or dialects) entries.

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<sup>5</sup> Suniti Kumar Chatterjee: *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language Part-I: 1926 (Reprint 1970)* London, pp 9-10

<sup>6</sup> T.W. Clark: *Nepali and Pahari in Sebeok T. A. (ed.) Current trends in Linguistics, Vol-5, Linguistics in South Asia, Mouton 1969, pp 249-277*

- 1961: *Gorkhali* and *Nepali* – two separate mother tongues grouped under *Nepali* language.
- 1971: *Gorkhali / Nepali*
- 1981: *Gorkhali / Nepali*
- 1991: *Nepali* (Nepali includes Gorkhali)
- 2001: *Nepali* (Nepali includes Gorkhali)

## VII

### ***SOCIOLINGUISTIC INFORMATION***

As a language Nepali uses Devanagari script for writing purpose. A good number of publications both narrative and non-narrative are produced on regular basis in the language. The narratives include lyrics, plays, songs, short stories, novels etc. Daily newspapers, magazines, periodicals at regular interval are also produced in the language. The non-narratives include prose for different educational level (elementary, secondary, graduate, post-graduate level) where subjects like history, politics, science, sociology have been covered. Besides, the composition of academic writings, the creative prose writing are also available in the language. The movies and documentaries are also produced in good number in the language.

The language is the medium of instruction upto post-graduate level. It is also used in Religion for preaching, teaching and ritualistic observations. The cultural programmes in the language are both broadcast and telecast on regular basis. The films and documentaries are produced in regular interval in the language. The language is the vehicle of local administration (Municipality, village) and judiciary.

## VIII

### ***THE PRESENTATION OF THE VOLUME***

Since this Volume pertains to Sikkim state so regarding furnishing of the general information of Sikkim has been precluded as the *LSI-Sikkim Part-I* includes all the relevant information on Sikkim state like

- a) Brief history of Sikkim
- b) The administrative Division of Sikkim
- c) The people of Sikkim and their languages
- d) The linguistic composition of Sikkim
- e) Treatment of the languages specific to Sikkim in Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*.

And so on.

So, the repetition of the same has been avoided in the present Volume being the common concerns of both the Volume.

Rather, the present Volume *LSI-Sikkim (Part-II)* presents the following

Chapter-I      **Introduction** which covers

- i) Background of the Volume
- ii) About the present Volume
- iii) Brief history of Nepali language
- iv) Treatment of Nepali in Grierson's LSI
- v) Nepali in present India
- vi) Appearance of Nepali in Indian Censuses
- vii) Sociolinguistic Information and so on

Chapter-II      **Nepali in Sikkim** which contains

- i) Census data on Nepali language
- ii) Census data on bilingualism in Nepali language
- iii) Sociolinguistic setting of the Nepali language spoken in Sikkim.
- iv) The grammatical description of Nepali language spoken in Sikkim  
which covers the Phonology, Morphophonemics, Morphology,  
Syntax of the language along with one text in Nepali.

Chapter-III      **The comparative study of Nepali spoken in Sikkim, West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh.**

Chapter-IV **The comparative 500 lexicon of Nepali of Sikkim, West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh.**

Chapter-V **Appendix** which shows  
i) The grammatical features of Nepali in West Bengal (Appendix-I)  
ii) The grammatical features of Nepali in Himachal Pradesh (Appendix-II)

Chapter-VI **Conclusion**

## IX

### *SCOPE OF FUTURE STUDIES*

The study of the dialectal varieties along with the status of Standardization of the studied languages of Sikkim including Nepali, undertaken both in *LSI-Sikkim (Part-I)* and *LSI-Sikkim (Part-II)* Volumes, may be taken up for future studies in the line of proposal already specified in *LSI-Sikkim (Part-I)*.

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