

# A TRANSLATION OF LAKṢMIPRASADA DEVAKOṬA'S "THE FIFTEENTH OF THE MONTH OF AṢADHA"

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Man in completion has to live in several places and in several persons, he has to be permanently aware of a wide circle and various events. It is here that then forms itself the true spirit which makes man a real world citizen.

NOVALIS

## INTRODUCTION

Among the works of Lakṣmīprasāda Devakoṭā (1909-1959), who along with Lekhanātha Paudyāla (1884-1965) and Balakṛṣṇa Sama (1902-1981) form the triumvirate of modern Nepali literature, the essay "Aṣādhako pandhra" (Nep.: "The fifteenth of [the month of] Aṣādhā") belongs to the poet's early writings. With the exception of his first poem, these were published from Vikrama Saṃvat (abbr. V.S.) 1991 (1934/35) onwards in the literary journal "Sārādā", which was published from Kathmandu and which became "a landmark in the history of Nepali literature."<sup>1</sup> The essay is believed to be the first prose writing and the first published essay by Devakoṭā. The Nepali literary critic Abhi Subedi states, "this was the first genuine and standard essay writing in Nepali," excelling all previous attempts in "technique, inventiveness, and organisation."<sup>2</sup> The style of the essay and its biographical-psychological value are outlined in a short resumé by the writer and critic Tārānātha Sarmā, saying that the first essay of Devakoṭā, written in Western style, is like all essays of his 'Lakṣmībandhasaṃgraha' a personal manifesto written in poetical prose.<sup>3</sup> The essay was preceded by poems in Nepali, among them one in the form of a sonnet.<sup>4</sup> Devakoṭā's second prose writing was entitled "Purva ra paścima" (Nep.: "East and West") and was published in V.S. 1995 (1938/39). The subject matter of this essay points to an important trait of Devakoṭā's work, namely his symbiotic-amalgamative approach revealing itself from his early phase and resulting in a lasting commitment to adapt and incorporate Western literary forms, humanistic ideas, and sociopolitical awareness in his writings, climaxing in the Nepali

epic "Pramīthas" based on the Greek mythological subject "Prometheus", his final work.

Two years after the essay "The Fifteenth of Aṣādha" a poem entitled "Kisān" (Nep.: "Farmer") was published,<sup>5</sup> which shows the author's continued pursuit of the same social groups as featured in his first essay.

After its first publication in "Sārādā" in 1993 V.S. (1936), the essay was published by "Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti" in 2002 V.S. (91945/46) and by "Nepalī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti" in 2013 V.S. (1956/57) as part of the omnibus volume "Lakṣmī nibandha sāgraha" ("Collection of essays of Lakṣmi"). Between 2019 V.S. (1962/63) and 2044 V.S. (1987/88), the essay collection has seen ten further editions through "Sājhā Prakasana". With the exception of one case, the textual divergences of the different editions are not discussed here. For the translation of the text given below, the first edition was used.

The content of the essay projects the atmosphere and activities of a day in the Nepali month of "āṣādha" (June/July), called a "Mahotsava" (Skt.: "grand festival")<sup>6</sup> by the author. This "grand festival", however, is not marked in the calendar of religious or national festivals in which the Himalayan Hindu kingdom abounds. It also remains unmentioned in comprehensive descriptions and studies of festivals and festive days or rites and rituals of Nepal.<sup>7</sup> The day in question differs from festive days like Dasaim, Bālachaturdasī, Sivarātri, Prithvījayantī, etc., in as much as it is not centered around a god or goddess, a king or hero, an ancestor, a demon or a spirit. It furthermore is not disposing of pomp or glamour, or of unusual performances. Bearing no extraordinary audio-visual focus point, no ritualistic make-up which might attract the eye and interest of a spectator or researcher, it nevertheless portrays an essential and typical trait of Nepalese culture which is overall marked by the predominance of its agrarian background.

The fifteenth of Aṣādha is a day of rice-planting, specifically the planting of the rice seedlings into the field. All over the country people living from the soil<sup>8</sup> are engaged in a common task. Only those parts of the country where rice planting is not possible are excluded. Sharing the same kind of aim and work is what essentially characterizes the "grand festival" which is more a long day of work than one of festive rest. The day's labour, consisting mainly of manual fieldwork, cares for livelihood of the families. The activities of the farmers on that day bear fruit in the form of provision of a basic but in the hilly regions most valuable and appreciated food for the next one year. Collective labour, singing, dancing, eating, and playful interactions of the young people, even of opposite sexes, are its visible

elements. These factors seem to generate a mood of general happiness all over the country on that day.

It is of historical interest that at the time of Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Sāha even their Majesties the King and Queen followed a custom of taking part in the act of planting rice and receiving a "tīkā" (cf. note 19) of mud from the farmers on that day.<sup>9</sup>

To the basic structure of the day belongs its climatological function, making it quasi-synonymous with the beginning of the monsoon season bringing the sufficient amount of water necessary for the growing of rice in areas with normal or little water supply. Eighty-five percent of the rice grown in Nepal is cultivated under rain-fed conditions.<sup>10</sup> The summer monsoon usually starts during the last days of the month of "jyeṣṭha" (May/June) in the eastern parts of Nepal and from there spreads westward. Two weeks later it will have affected all the areas under the influence of the monsoon.

In the lunar religious calendar, the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha can fall on certain days of the half-monthly lunar periods (Skt. pakṣa) of "jyeṣṭha śukla (Skt. "bright") -", "āṣāḍha kṛṣṇa (Skt. "dark") -", or "āṣāḍha śukla pakṣa". There are no public religious celebrations during this time of the year except for a few local festivals and the prominent and widely observed festival of "Hariśayanī" on "āṣāḍha śukla ekādaśī" (Skt. "the eleventh day of the bright (=waxing) half of the lunar month of Aṣāḍha"), which never precedes but always follows the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha. "Hariśayanī" (Skt. Viṣṇu's lying down) marks the beginning of a four month sleep of god Viṣṇu as Hari coinciding with the period of major release from field work for the farmers between the planting and harvesting of rice. The prospects of a time of repose after the long days of planting may perhaps contribute to the joyful mood of the people described by Devakoṭā.

When asked why the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha and not any other day of the month has become the special day for rice planting, people often mention its astrological significance of being regarded as the longest day of the year. As such it would be comparable to the twenty-first of June, the day of the summer solstice on the northern hemisphere according to the Gregorian calendar. In fact the date regularly falls on the twenty-ninth of June, exceptionally on the twenty-eighth. The conception of being the longest day, however, is held by the population at large, not by present-day astrologers. Complimentarily, the fifteenth of the month of Pausa (December/January) is regarded as the longest night and generally equivalent to the thirtieth of December. The fifteenth of Aṣāḍha as calendar, which on the whole is less often used than the lunar one in celebrative or commemorative occasions. The date forms part of the eight days before and after midsummer, granting a

maximum duration of daylight.<sup>11</sup> The long daylight helps the farmers to be highly efficient in one day's time of work.

Illustrating the meaning of the month of Aṣāḍha is the often cited proverbial saying: "Mānu khāi murī ubjāune (belā)" which means in equal shortness (the time of) producing one "murī" after eating [only] one "mānu". (Nep. "mānu"/"mānā": measurement by weight equal to approximately one pound or half a kilogram; Nep. "murī" a measurement by weight equal to approximately one hundred and sixty pounds or forty kilograms). In modern terms it could be rendered as "getting large output with little input." the proverb is explained by Kṛṣṇaprasāda Parājuli as "Time of earning, which is to say, the hasty work of the month of Aṣāḍha. Isn't that so? Where do you roam about at this time of hard pressing work? Now is 'the time of yielding one murī after eating one mānu.' (By) working hard now gold can be caused to grow afterwards."<sup>12</sup>

In the mind of the population, the most frequent association with the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha after "rice planting" is, however, the thought of "(the day of) eating beaten rice and curd (Nep.: "dahī ciurā khāne")", uttered with a smile. The custom of eating curd and beaten rice in the field is commonly believed to help increase the fertility of the soil. The practice is even continued by urban families now living without cultivable land at their disposal.

Devakoṭā attests and reflects the inherent culinary aspect of the day when he gives his individual formula for celebrating that day as "I do not want to offer beaten rice and curd, I want to present a song."<sup>13</sup> This sentence stands like a motto for his writing about the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha. Devakoṭā's proclaimed intention is expressed in the context of thoughts on true poetic creation and intellectual culture, where he tries to walk on new paths. Its end suggests a search for a renewal through redefining the norms for Nepali literature and arts.

The poet's wish of presenting a song goes well along with the narrative frame of the essay's topic of the author's walk from his home to an elevated place in nature where he reposes and from where he returns home later in the day. From the combination of song, moving around in the outside, and halting at places, one can be led to imagine the portrait of a bard of the Sanskrit tradition or a "gāine" (Nep.: "minstrel") of the particular and still extant Nepalese tradition.<sup>14</sup>

A parallel between the possible consequences of the day of "rice planting" and the days of "pajanī" and "thamautī" is drawn in the popular saying: "ropāimmā dulne pajanīmā bhulne": "Roaming around at [the time of] rice planting is equal to being forgotten at [the time of] 'pajanī'." "Pajanī" marked the day of the proclaimed order of the Śāha kings, and from the time of Janga

Bahādur Rāṇā onwards the order of the Rāṇā prime minister, with regard to the annually granted extension, transfer, dismissal or promotion of the government service holders. At the time of Devakoṭā it was customary that the speaker of the Rāṇā prime minister announced the order in front of Siṃha Darbār, sometimes with the de facto leader of the country presiding over the act from the balcony. As a token of reverence and acceptance of the order, a coin was deposited at his feet by those whose names were read out and who agreed. "Thamautī" is the Nepali term for "extension of tenure of office". Almost exclusively for the officials of the Rāṇā family, held either on the same day or on a separate one preceding the day of "pajanī" by a couple of weeks, the function of "thamautī" was held for the same purpose. Probably because of the repetitive announcement of the word "thamautī", the function became called after it. During the time of Candra Samser (1901-1928)<sup>15</sup> the day of "pajanī" was regularly held on "srāvana sukla pañcamī".<sup>16</sup> The system was changed to the months of "Vaisakha/Jyestha" during the reign of Juddha Śamser (1932-1945). It was abolished with the introduction of a parliamentary form of government in 2007 V.S.. With it the system of the "fiscal year" starting from "Śrāvana" and ending in "Aṣāḍha" came into use.<sup>17</sup>

The formulation "The life-breath of man receives its annual extension"<sup>18</sup> used by Devakoṭā while entering into the mood of the farmer boys and girls also refers to the now historical custom of "pajanī". In Devakoṭā's metaphor an equivalence between the natural order and the political order is alluded to, but its aim is not the creation of a harmony but rather the demonstration of the superiority of the farmers' life-style over against the office holders'. In the same context a subtle comparison is drawn with even the greatest festival of Nepal "Dasaim" (Durgābhavānīpūjā) when parents present a yearly renewed "tikā"<sup>19</sup> to their children: "It looked as if the earth had given a mark of blessing on the forehead of the peasant youths."<sup>20</sup>

From a folkloristic point of view, the eminent Nepalese scholar and literary critic Pārasmaṇi Pradhāna summarizes the charm of the essay in his monograph on Devakoṭā, saying, "Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize Winner, drew his inspiration from nature and man ... In the same way, Laxmi Prasad got his inspiration to write *Asārko Pandraha* i.e. the busy days of *Asār* from the busy life of the jolly hill-folk during the busy month of *Asār*, when they transplant the young green rice plants in the hill terraces of their pleasant paddy-fields. How they forget their worries and toil in their lovely fields singing and dancing accompanied by *bethi* i.e. the music of the occasion is worthy of praise."<sup>21</sup>

The psycho-emotional dimension of the month of *Aṣāḍha* and the beginning of the rainy season is almost incantatorily touched upon by Dharmarāja Thāpā and Hamsapure Suvedī. While exploring the field of folk

literature of Nepal, they depict and characterize the spirit of the month of Aṣādhā as “Singing the songs of Aṣādhā, planting the fields, having fun. In this way, having diffused to all the feeling of Aṣādhā has become long-lived in the life of the people. In the sentimental hearts of the people it will linger on for ages – never to be forgotten and never to get lost – be it so!”<sup>22</sup>

In his first essay and prose writing, Devakoṭā concentrates mainly on three levels of observation and reflection: description of nature and her emotional impact, verbal and non-verbal forms of archaic human expression, and feelings and thoughts regarding his ideals of life and art. The author’s non-traditional thoughts about literature become obvious in his criticism of prevalent trends in Nepali poetry which he qualifies as pretentious and old fashioned.<sup>23</sup> The essay culminates when the author compares the natural human products of poetry and music to the quality and achievements of trained and taught artistic production. He feels that the untrained, natural way of expression is superior to the artificial one because it contains a greater and purer intensity of feeling.<sup>24</sup> In the first research on Devakoṭā and his works by a western scholar, David Rubin sees “Devakoṭā discovering true poetry not in the literary journals but in the songs of the peasant reapers [sic].”<sup>25</sup>

The essay as a whole mirrors Nepal’s state between general antiquity and isolated avantgardistic modernity, shifting slowly from rural to urban forms of life. Son of an orthodox Nepali Brahmin and foremost writer and humanist of Nepal, Lakṣmīprasāda Devakoṭā had grew up solely in the Nepal-Indo-Tibetan cultural environment. Only until a later period, after having become a minister of state, did he leave it – a culture which, however, shows signs of disintegration and alienation in the beginning of the twentieth century, thus provoking and legitimizing the author’s search for new horizons and the revelations of the higher beauties of Nepalese life. The matter of description and deliberation is a unique example from the rich world of festivals, auspicious acts, and celebrations in Nepal. Here, however, not seen through a researcher’s distanced eye, but rather felt in depth and expressed by an indigenous heart. Devakoṭā’s attitude of mind at this early stage of life was highly influenced and formed by western romanticism. In “Aṣādhako pandhra” he tried to build upon his knowledge gained from western literary forms and spiritual orientation. With this essay Devakoṭā probably achieved one of the first truly romantic writings in Nepali language. Although the tenor of the writing is essentially subjective, it nevertheless also objectively reflects Nepalese culture on a broad level.

The translation of this tiny piece of Asian literature from the original Nepali into an international language may contribute to a better understanding of an alien contemporary society and culture by providing an

authentic insight into the twentieth century Nepalese world of thought and feeling. The message of this literary document seems to imply an attempt towards the creation of a conscious cultural identity and self-understanding on the part of the outstanding poet and writer Lakṣmīprasāda Devakoṭā who, in native terms, "gave a golden touch to many forms of literature."<sup>26</sup>

### THE FIFTEENTH OF [THE MONTH OF] ASADHA (Translation)

There is rejoicing in Nepal. The heart extends a loving welcome to the newly arrived guest. As soon as the enchanting countenance of today's dawn at the edge of the horizon over the eastern ridges became visible, the rose-red colour of blissfulness ascended to the many coloured stretch of scattered clouds, for a second the colour of heaven slightly [making] the earth reddish brown. There was a particular charm in the rosy dawn of today. A distinctive merriment of the heart was lying in today's sunrise. The look of love adds wonderment to the beauty of nature, the colour of emotion ennobles the world. Sweet waves are rolling in the heart of Nepal. Today there is that thankfulness and delight which occurs when heaven responds on hearing one's call. By the command of God and through His mercy for His children the earth has acquired youthfulness. We go to plant rice in the hope of a golden harvest; in our hands are the green rice seedlings, in our minds are joyfulness and longing, in our hearts is a light rhythmic quivering, in our throats surge up the sweet songs of our hearts. Today we enter the soft, swampy fields. Today is the planting of joy in Nepal, today is the fifteenth of *Aṣāḍha*.<sup>27</sup>

In this mainly agricultural country the day of rice-planting<sup>28</sup> is a nationwide festival. On this day the magic of life touches the cottages standing squeezed together in different corners [of the countryside]. In the twilight of the morning the godly messenger of *Vanaspati*<sup>28</sup> raises his voice in the courtyard of a farmhouse. The farmers' children welcome the morning by clapping their small hands with joy. Blinking his eyes in the sweet dream of the morning, the farmer now also opens his eyes in the pleasant state of waking up to reality. After he noted the agreeable speech, the gentle laughter and the jumping of the young boys, [his] folksong makes them dance for a moment, fervently snapping the fingers of his open, honest hands. The moment, however, the mother of these boys lights up her sparkling eyes laughing in an open, innocent way, the preparations for the planting start. The villagers and the farmers, who on other days are engaged in manifold activities, all go dancing, jumping, and singing with mattocks in their hands to every field and plantable space. Taking a fistful of seedlings, the exuberant lasses laugh, singing little songs only, some in a loud, some in a restrained manner, whilst, in between, teasingly looking at each other out of their

youthful nature. The air is resounding with their song. In the cool breeze their high, clear, natural voices are an oblation from the incense of the heart. The natural sweetness of such throats causes the whole rigid path of the art of singing, all the sweat-demanding drills of the masters, the unnatural faces of the singer of a *mahaphil*,<sup>30</sup> the swaying of heads<sup>31</sup> of all the frustrated connoisseurs, the whole art of singing of the civilized world to blush from shame. Their open voices are not the slaves of exercise, these words are an emission from the heart. It is the emphasis on joyfulness and feeling that gives an innate sweetness to them. No cuckoo needs to sweat in taking up [the learning of] the *tānapura*.<sup>32</sup> In these neighbours of nature the semblance of primeval singing which comes from the bottom of the heart is met; today the hillocks and hills, mountains, slopes, plantable spaces, all are resounding with this hearty sound. Voices from the heart are whirling in the wind, tugging even at [our] hearts of stone. The true voices from the heart of Nepal are rising, are tilting on this day.

It is not that this rejoicing and this felicity have not touched the town, too, which is trying to stay apart, having separated itself from nature. The awareness that today is the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha is manifested well in all town dwellers. They also experience a new kind of felicity. Maybe our forefathers shed sweat on the earth in the same way too. The feeling of felicity on this day has probably come partly from them. To some extent it even seems as if by the theory of mutual influence, the condition of the farmers has entered the roofs of all.

We want to take some time off from the life of give-and-take. Our hearts are hearing the voice of nature's invitation in the fields of today. Our bodies, too, are drenched with the juice of the earth where today's planting is taking place. Even though we may remain apart, still we are the relatives of nature.<sup>33</sup> We are also invited to today's rejoicing. In our lives too we have experienced the felicity of various forms of planting. In the fields of art and literature we have received that very delight of planting. Our very first effort, too, resembled this planting and its beauty. Today we are offering our first congenial reverence to the planting. The fifteenth of Aṣāḍha is also a most welcome guest of the town.

With this invitation I too went out together with a friend in order to enjoy the pleasures of this day. Our handicapped life enclosed by four walls and a roof finds distraction beneath the wide sky and in the open air; with this amicable thought in mind I went out. I had no particular destination, the movement of my feet was not bound by any aim of going to a particular place. On the way a familiar person asked me, "Where are you going?" I answered, "Somewhere." There was a long distance, indicating phonological lengthening<sup>34</sup> in the pronunciation of "Somewhere." While walking we



reached a certain place, whose common name I would not want to mention and sweep away the magic of my experience from the reader. We sat down in an elevated place. The eastern slopes had become green; their bluish face possessed the magic of a strange indistinctiveness. From between the scattered shreds of cloud, the sun god's brightness had caused the range of vision to be spotted by shadow and light. On the far reaching mountains the beauty of verdure showed itself in all the open spaces touched by the sunlight; again a shadow fell and beneath the magic of the same bluish indistinctiveness the planting was going on. Stooping village lasses, swinging<sup>35</sup> their necklaces of coralstone, were planting rice seedlings, were singing songs. While doing the same kind of work, the peasant youths answered back (with their song).<sup>36</sup> A little further away two cottages appeared like two retreats, as if, sleeping, having found themselves a clean courtyard.

Here, there was singing, there was poetry, the pens of the speed writers<sup>37</sup> could not have moved as fast as *Sarasvati*<sup>38</sup> in those tongues. A question was put from one side, (and) immediately the appropriate answer followed from the other side, and this even in a musical, natural metre. It would appear as if the poems of "*Śārada*"<sup>39</sup> were only verses of laborious work. Here there was an uninterrupted flow, a gushing, which was not to be found in all of the heavy pieces published in it. Hearing their voices it seemed as if the weight of figures of speech, rhyme, metaphor, and so forth were only shackles on the neck of poetry. In them was that true sweetness which is only present in the language of feeling, not in the language of thought. When even the most common man is touched by a stimulating feeling, then an unusual quality of pronunciation manifests itself. In the genuine weeping of man there is always poetry as there is in true joy. We want to compose poems rather than let them out; they do not compose them, they draw them out from inside. We possess the competence of words, they the sweetness of feeling. Let the poets weaving garlands of worn-out words come with me on the fifteenth of *Asāḍha*. My invitation is also extended to those who try to sprinkle loud, artificial colour.<sup>40</sup> I do not want to offer beaten rice and curd, I want to present a song.

Below us the planting was going on, at the same time some fun and games, too. One girl was pelting another with a little mud from her hands. This day is understood as rejoicings of love and happiness as well as a pelting with mud. For today the splashes and patterns of mud are the beautiful ornaments on the clothes and faces of the village girls. The mud of rejoicing and love; dark spots like the ones of hatred and greed are not visible. It looked as if the earth had given a mark of blessing on the forehead of the peasant youths. The life-breath of man receives its annual extension.

Some green plants from the edge of the rice field are fastened to a girl's hair, some green rice seedlings are sprinkled on the hair of another one. Some wear the red *Asāre* flowers,<sup>41</sup> others also one or two tender wisps of maize. Here, there are the enchanting vistas of life.

Now lunchtime had come. Round green plates of lotus leaves, designed and made by the hands of nature, were laid out at the edge of the field. Some beaten rice and salt, a ginger preparation along with a small portion of potatoes in spicy oil were placed down. All came and sat in different places, sat as in the age preceding the revelation of the law and of the rules of good behaviour. They started to eat to their heart's content. It appeared as if they were forgetting the world for half an hour through the flavour of a suggestion of paradise.<sup>42</sup> Their fatigue adds a novel taste to the completely coarse, dry food; an unprecedented pleasantness is growing. We try to find taste outside, they draw it out from inside. We add aroma to spices and inflict too much maltreatment on the liver. In them the peculiar happiness of a life of hardship showed itself in the crunching of their beaten rice. Although God has not granted the means for pleasure to the poor, He has given the taste of pleasure and joy. The right use of the limbs of the body had seasoned the variety on the leaves of that lotus flower; physical exercise, as cook, had prepared a feast of joy. While they ate, all kinds of frolicking, laughing, and winking were going on. The crunching of beaten rice was not allowed to turn into a tedious ritual, the laughter in between also gave relaxation as well as increasing the taste. They were the Greek gods of an Olympus in the form of the mountains of Nepal. Water which had come flowing from inside the mountain was made to trickle down in a thin shining line from the spout [consisting] of a cowpea leaf.<sup>43</sup> It was that which served as the uninterrupted flow of cool nectar for their thirst.

They started to work again. For a long time we looked on, listened. Thick clouds had accumulated in the sky, some raindrops fell, it became even darker and a heavy rain poured down. We had no umbrella with us. At first we thought of running away, but the rain enveloped us, made us wet. There was no escape by fleeing. We slowly moved towards our home.

As for them in the field, they were planting while singing with even more joy. From a little further away we heard:

"It's the time of rice planting,  
lightening has struck,  
the showering of rain sang a song;<sup>44</sup>  
the clouds' clapping [the rhythm]  
- the river jumped up -  
made my heart dance.  
The ornamentation of mud

imprinted on the blouse  
 is beautiful today;  
 today we laugh,  
 today we sing.  
 Tomorrow, oh my God! who weeps  
 because death has taken away!"

Our clothes had become wet through and through too, stained by the mud as well. It seemed that we, too, had well celebrated today's festival of the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha. We, having also performed the planting today, were making our way back home. When I arrived, I felt a strange happiness; inside the house everyone was wearing a smile. I said, "Today is the fifteenth of Aṣāḍha."<sup>45</sup>

## NOTES

1. Kumar Pradhan, *History of Nepali Literature*, p. 196
2. Abhi Subedi, *Nepali Literature: Background and History*, p. 174
3. Tārānātha Sarmā, *Nepālī sāhityako itihāsa*, p. 140
4. According to the chronology given by Kumarabahadur Jośī, "Mahākavi Devakoṭā ra unkā mahākāvya", p. 328
5. Republished in "Bhikhārī", a collection of selected poems by Lakṣmīprasāda Devakoṭā, p. 35-38. First publication in *Śāradā*.
6. L.P. Devakoṭā, "Aṣāḍhako pandhra" in: *Śāradā*, Varsa 4, Anka 9, V.S. 1993, p. 19, l.c.
7. Mary M. Anderson, *Festivals of Nepal*; Satyamohan Jośī, *Nepālī cādaparva*; Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*; Punyaratna Vajrācārya, *Hāmro cāda-parva*; Toyānātha Pantako pañcānga (pātro) V.S. 2046, ed. Premanātha Panta et al.
8. Comprising more than ninety percent of the population of Nepal even today (according to government official statistics of the 80s).
9. I owe this information to Jñānamani Nepala, CNAS.
10. Rajeshwar Nath Mallick, *Rice in Nepal*, p. 32
11. For the importance of hours of sunlight per day in rice growing, see R.N. Mallick, op. cit.
12. 'Mānu khāera muri ubjāune belā' Kamai garne samaya arthāt asāra māsako dhamādham. Haina, kāmake mārāmāra bhaeko belāmā pani timi kahām rallinchau? 'Mānu khāera muri ubjaune belā' yahī ho. Ahile besamarī khate po pachi suna phalāuna sakincha." Kṛṣṇaprasada Parājuli, "Nepālī ukhāna ra gāumkhāne kathā", p. 132.
13. "Ma dahi ciurā khuāuna cāhanna, gīta śunāuna sahanchu." L.P. Devakoṭā, loc. cit., p. 21, l.c.

14. This comparison will not be accepted by Nepalese readers because it is based on different caste membership. The bard of Sanskrit literature is a high-caste member: "chetri" (Nep.) and "bāhuna (Nep.), "kṣatriya" (Skt.) and "brāhmaṇa" (Skt.), whereas the "gaine" of Nepal is a member of a lower caste, unidentifiable with by high-caste members.
15. The time of the regency of Rāṇā prime ministers is given according to Netra B. Thapa, "A short history of Nepal" p. 185
16. Ludwig Stiller emphasises that, in general, it was the king's personal decision when to hold or not to hold "pajani". *The Silent Cry*, p. 254
17. I owe the historical information of this paragraph to Candradeva Ojhā and Dinesarāja Panta.
18. "Mānisako prāṇalāi varṣa dinako thamautī mildacha." L.P. Devakoṭā, loc. cit., p. 21, l.c.
19. A mark of blessing on the forehead, usually consisting of a coloured (vermilion) powder of natural substances, often mixed with rice grains.
20. "Kisān kā thitāharuka nidhārmā prthivīle āsīrvādako tikā lagāi die jasto bhāna pardacha." L.P. Devakoṭa, loc. cit., p. 21, l.c.
21. Paras Mani Pradhan, *Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota*, p. 57
22. "Asāre gāera, kheta ropera, ramāilo garera. Yasarī asārakā bhāvanā samcāra bhaera hāmro lokajīvanamā cirajīvita bhairahachan. Yugayugasamma bhāvuka lokahrdyamā tāmssiirahanechan - manastalabāta kahilyai nabirsine ra naharāune garera. Astu." Dharmarāja Thāpā ra Hamsapure Suvedī, "Nepālī lokasāhityako vivecanā", p. 149
23. "Jaḍaurī sabdakā mālā gāmsne kaviharū masanga āṣādhako pandhramā āun. Carko krtrima ranga caḍhāuna khojnelāi panī mero nimantranā cha." L.P. Devakoṭā, loc. cit., p. 20, r.c., seq.
24. Different literary approaches are taken while choosing the same season or else the same activities as objects in a poem by Kedarman Vyathit and in a "Khandakāvya" by Lekhanātha Paudyāla. Whereas the latter keeps in line with traditional Sanskrit poetics, images, and ideals in describing the monsoon period among the other seasons of Nepal in his "Rtu vicāra", the former one tries to build a consciousness for national and social action in his poem no 20 of "'Cinta' - bāṭa" from the poem collection "Saṅgama", p. 86-88. (The poem has been entitled "The Ears Of Paddy" by the translators Madhav Lal Karmacharya and Ayodhya Prasad Pradhan in Kedarman Vyathit, *Selected Poems*.) The rainy season as literary theme is well known from Sanskrit literature through Kālidāsa's "Meghadūta".
25. David Rubin, *Nepali Visions' Nepali dreams*, p. 19
26. Kumar Pradhan, *History of Nepali Literature*, p. 196

27. Name of the month with which the rains of the summer monsoon start.
28. The growing of rain-fed rice in Nepal takes place in two steps: The seeds are sown thickly on the watery surface of the ploughed and smoothed seedbed. Under favourable conditions shoots become visible after four or five days (on a water-free soil surface). When the stalks reach a height of about 15 to 30 cm the seedlings are transplanted in small bundles at a span's distance into the prepared fields. Depending on the sum of the conditions, it takes about three to five weeks between sowing and transplanting. (These are the author's own observations. For a detailed description and comparisons of different conditions, see Rajeshwar Nath Mallick, op. cit.)
29. God of plants.
30. A place of song and dance in Indian Moghul culture.
31. The image refers to the particular movement of the head of South-Asian music lovers responding to certain sound structures.
32. Indian string instrument, often played in classical music.
33. In this narrative passage the forms of the first person plural can also be read, as first person singular. The assumption of a plural is majestatis being a common feature in Nepali and Hindi oral expression is supported by the author's shift to "hūm" as predicate of "hāmī" in this sentence, instead of "chaum/haum" as in the preceding formulation, and as later on amended to in the second edition of the text: "Dūrarāhe pani hāmī prakrtikā nātādār haum." L.P. Devakoṭā, "Asadhako pandhra" in *Lakṣmī-nibandha-saṃgraha* (2002 ed.)
34. Skt "pluta": prolated to three units of the length of a vowel. The lengthening of "tā" in "katā katā" intensifies the indefiniteness of the expression.
35. Text reads "cacakri", I amend to "cakri".
36. This singing is obviously done in the form of the "doharī gīta" where separate groups of usually boys and girls sing an alternate song, which is basically spontaneously composed. The "doharī gīta" is also cultivated in public shows of prized competition in present day Nepal. Some examples of the often erotic content of rice planting songs of the ethnic group of the Nevars from the Kathmandu valley have been translated and commented on by Siegfried Lienhard *Nevārī gītimañjarā*, p. 90 ff.
37. Nep. "āśukavi", a poet who can compose extempore or at high speed. Devakoṭā himself later became known as one of the foremost among those poets. "[The long epic poem] Sulocanā is Devakoṭā's [product

- of] imagination of ten days" (Sulocanā Devakotāko dasa dine kalpanā ho). Rāmamañi Risāla, *Nepāli kāvya ra kavi*, p. 114.
38. Hindu goddess of art and learning.
39. Name of the first journal of literature in Nepal, coedited for a period by L.P. Devakotā. Bālachandra Śarmā, *Nepālī Sāhityako Itihāsa*, p. 150
40. An allusion to poets using high sounding, inflated diction. Cf. note No. 23.
41. Nep. "asāre(kā) phula", the flower of the tree "Lagestroemia flosreginae Retz, Lythraceaeindica" which blossoms in the month of Asāḍha (botanical name according to Keshab Shrestha *A field guide to Nepali names for plants*; Turner identifies it as "Viburnum erubescens").
42. Skt/Nep. "alakāpurī", the capital city of Kubera, the God of riches, situated on Mount Kailāśa.
43. In fields and forests a leaf is put as a lip to a small natural water basin, occasionally supported by some handfuls of clay to heighten or strengthen the border from where water for drinking or washing is collected.
44. Text reads "gīda", I amend to "gīta".
- \*45.\* I wish to thank the Tribhuvan University Library, the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, and the Kaiser Library for kindly allowing me to consult their materials. Notes No. 10 and 20 I owe to Prof. Dr. S.P. Lohani's valuable comments. Thanks are also due to Frances and Ben for revising my English. The translation has benefitted from readings by Dr. P.P. Devakota and Prof. Dr. S.P. Lohani.

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