

Balkrishna Pokharel, ed. *Paccīsa Varṣakā Bhāṣika Carcā: Nepālī Bhāṣākā Viśeṣa Sandarbhamā* Twenty-five Years of Linguistic Discussion: With Special Reference to Nepali. Edited with an introduction by Balkrishna Pokharel. Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, Silver Jubilee Publications Series: 16. 2039 V.S./ 1982 A.D., pp. 10, 258. In Nepali. Price not indicated.

*Paccīsa Varṣakā Bhāṣika Carcā* (henceforth *PVBC*) contains an assortment of 19 articles on the Nepali language -- all written in Nepali. The contributors form a core of eminent linguists and writers of Nepal. It is therefore appropriate to look closely into the contents of *PVBC*. This review is geared to that goal.

In the present stage of knowledge about the Nepali linguistics, a collection of articles in a book form and dealing exclusively with various aspects of the Nepali language can only be hailed as a significant advance. It is to be regretted though that most contributions have been written with more enthusiasm than caution.

Not all of the contributions contained in *PVBC* belong to the mainstream linguistics (as admitted by the editor, p. 5). Consequently, the remarks that follow will be restricted primarily to a total of eight "especially technical" (*viśeṣa prāvidhika (śāstrīya)*, editor, pp. 5-6) studies only.

Four other papers, however, also deserve mention. Sapkota's paper ('*vyākaraṇale janajibrāmā roka lagāunu hūdaina*', pp. 14-16) is a variationist's delight, a warning to linguists who view language as a monolithic, static and homogeneous system, and a veritable guide to the sociolinguists of Nepal. Pande "Aseem"'s paper ('*"jyū, jī"* ko *prayoga*', pp. 21-23) presents a sociolinguistic analysis of the phenomena of verbalization

of respect in Nepali and makes interesting observations on the etymology of respectful suffixes *jyū*, *jī* and even *jū*. Parajuli's paper ('*śiṣṭa tathā grāmiṇa nepālī...*', pp. 33-45) begins with a linguistic description of what may loosely be called 'formal' (i.e. 'standard', 'educated', 'literary', etc.) and 'informal' (i.e. 'substandard', 'illiterate/rustic', 'conversational', etc.) varieties of Nepali, but ends up discussing the pedagogical and even sociopolitical implications of a possible coordination between the two varieties.

Acharya's paper ('*halanta bahiṣkāradekhi jimdo-nepālisamma...*' pp. 212-232) raises questions which may have significant linguistic implications. Basically, however, it addresses itself to a chronological survey of pros and cons of such "schools" of Nepali orthographic reform as *halanta vahiṣkārabāda*, *sajilobāda*, and *janaajibrobāda*, and it seeks to establish the superiority of Acharya's own "school?" (*Jimdo- Nepālī bhāṣābāda*) over others. Nothing further will be said about these studies here.

The eight "especially technical" studies are discussed below in the order these have been presented in the book under review.

Bandhu's paper ('*pāikelī paddhatianusāra nepālī vākyaharūko viśleṣaṇa*', pp. 46-63) presents a simple and lucid account of the Pikean Tagmemics, and sketches cursorily the mechanisms through which the Nepali sentences may be shown to be derived transformationally as it were from a limited core of basic clauses, as envisioned in the Tagmemic model. Writing about the Tagmemic model (or about any modern, i.e. western linguistic model for that matter), or writing a fragment of the Tagmemic grammar through the medium of Nepali is a laudable endeavor, and Bandhu deserves our sincere praise and admiration. One wishes though that the author had consistently provided the original English technical terminologies of Tagmemics within brackets when these are rendered into Nepali (a practice well

observed by other writers, e.g. Dahal, B. Pokharel, etc. in the volume). Such a practice would indeed be useful at the present state of art when no standard technical Nepali vocabulary exists. This would also help the reader, like myself for instance, to follow the main argument of the paper.

Sharma's paper (*'kehi dakṣiṇa esiyāli pratinidhi bhāṣāharumā kriyābāta banine saṁyojakaharū'*, pp. 64-77) deals with the use and functions of the so-called "conjunctive participles" in a few representative languages of South Asia. Data are provided from a total of five languages of three language families, e.g. Indo-Aryan (Nepali and Hindi); Tibeto-Burman (Newari); and Dravidian (Telegu and Tamil).

That the nonfinite verbals with conjunctive functions exist in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian is well known. That this phenomenon has areal implications has been ably demonstrated by Colin Masica (*Defining a Linguistic Area: South Asia*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Sharma's chief contribution lies in an extensive analysis of morphology and syntax of such nonfinite verbal participles which conjoin sentences in Nepali, Hindi, Newari, Telegu and Tamil. Sharma's analysis yields an interesting pattern of behavior: while Nepali, Newari, Tamil and Telegu continue to use nonfinite verbal participles with conjunctive functions, Hindi has shun such an areal characteristic and has adopted instead constructions which are more akin to western languages, especially English. Would a conscious or unconscious process of 'Westernization' or 'Hindization' lead to a similar phenomenon in Nepali (a process already in existence in Nepali, as noted by Sharma p. 72) remains to be seen.

In sum, Sharma's paper makes a significant contribution to the typological study of South Asian languages and linguistics.

Chapagai's paper ('nepālī anukaraṇātmaka śabdaharūko prajānana-kriyā' pp. 78-95) presents a thorough analysis of the morphology of onomatopoeic, i.e. imitative words in Nepali. Reduplication-partial or complete, reversed or nonreversed - appears to be the most productive (if not universal) process of formation of such imitative words in Nepali.

Dahal's study ('lekhyā sāmāgriko bhāṣika vyākhyāko rūparekhā' pp. 101-122) deals with grammatology in general and graphemics in particular. Stressing the value of the old written texts of a language such as Nepali, it discusses in sufficient detail the ways in which the linguistic interpretation of such old documents may be made by a historical and/or a descriptive linguist. A few of the major problems which a linguist may face in this venture are also discussed with suitable examples.

B. Pokharel's paper ('nepālīkā kehī dhvanitātvika behorāharū', pp. 123-142) deals with the historical phonology of Nepali (eastern dialect). In it, the author has undertaken to trace the sound changes which characterize the origin and development of Nepali from Sanskrit through Prakrit. The author discusses such sound changes as: (a) devoicing (of the final *b*) (b) vocalization, (c) cerebralization, (d) nasalization, (e) declusterization (in final position), (f) vowel rounding (as a result of progressive assimilation), (g) deaspiration (three types), and (h) 'flapping' of retroflex stops (called *luṅṭhībhavana* by the author, p. 139).

Only two remarks -- one general and one specific -- will be made about B. Pokharel's presentation.

*General.* A complete account of the historical phonology of Nepali would constitute a description of the earlier stage(s) of the language, a series of statements of phonological change, and a description of the sound system of the present-day Nepali. If phonological information on earlier stage(s) as well as the

present stage of Nepali is available, then the historical linguist is well advised to proceed with making statements about the characteristic sound changes of this language. If on the other hand, the description of the modern stage is lacking, then facts about the historical phonology of Nepali must be specifically presented. Since no adequate synchronic description of Nepali is available (to the best of my knowledge), a linguistic historian of Nepali must of necessity be specifically careful and even cautious in presenting the facts about the origin and development of this language.

*Specific.* The task of a historical phonologist of Nepali would be to come up with the best set of statements of sound change which will capture the significant generalizations about this language. B. Pokharel's art of writing phonological rules leaves much to be desired, as will be apparent from the discussion below.

B. Pokharel's phonological rules of First Deaspiration, Second Deaspiration, and Third Deaspiration (pp. 136-139) operate exactly under similar environments and are thus collapsible into one single rule, of the following type:

*P-rule of Deaspiration*

$$c^h \longrightarrow / \left\{ v - \overset{\#}{v} \right\}$$

The above rule states that in Nepali an aspirated consonant becomes unaspirated intervocalically and finally (word or syllable -- a lot more data need to be investigated in order to determine this).

Also, [h] is treated on par with other voiced aspirates (e.g. [g<sup>h</sup>, d<sup>h</sup>, j<sup>h</sup>, etc]) in B. Pokharel's phonological analysis. This practice may be in vogue in traditional historical phonology, but a closer look at the Nepali data suggests

that B. Pokharel's practice to include the P-rule of [h]--deletion within the P-rule of Second Deaspiration (p. 137) is unwarranted. A few of B. Pokharel's examples are listed below:

1. [sud<sup>h</sup>ar] → [sudar]
2. [bag<sup>h</sup>] → [bag]
3. [bəhini] → [bəini]
4. [sahu] → [saũ]
5. [məhajən] → [majən]

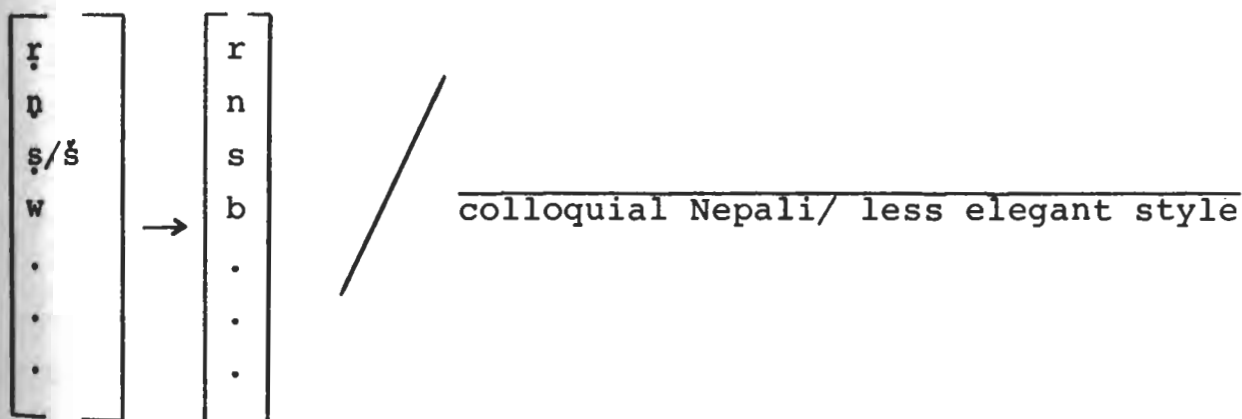
Examples 3-5 demonstrate that upon deletion (not 'deaspiration') of [h] in intervocalic positions, a reduction in the number of syllables is caused. The rule of deaspiration (examples 1-2), on the other hand, does not cause the syllable reduction, and hence ought not to be grouped with the rule of [h]--deletion. In other words, the rule of [h]--deletion and the rule of deaspiration should be treated distinctly as two separate rules.

B. Pokharel provides a set of six statements in order to describe the phenomenon of 'flapping' (*luṅṭhībhavana*, p. 139). Once again, only one phonological rule would be sufficient to describe the data adequately. A tentative formulation of this rule would sound as follows: In Nepali, a voiced retroflex stop (aspirated or unaspirated) becomes a (retroflex) flap syllable finally and intervocalically when no consonant -- homorganic or geminate -- intervenes between the preceding vowel and the voiced retroflex stop in question. Note that the constraint on the P-rule is crucial. This constraint, for example, disallows the Nepali words [piṅḍ] *piṅḍa* to become \*[pinṛ], and [ləḍḍu] *ḷaḍḍu* to become \*[ləṛṛu]. Words like /hoḍ/, ləḍnu/, guḍ<sup>h</sup>/, /prəuḍ<sup>h</sup>/, and pəḍ<sup>h</sup>ai/, on the other hand, meet the structural description of the above rule and become [hoṛ], [ləṛnu], [guṛ<sup>h</sup>], [prəũṛ<sup>h</sup>] and [pəṛ<sup>h</sup>ai],

respectively in their actual pronunciation. Upon further inquiry, this phenomenon of 'flapping' may turn out to be a pan-Indo-Aryan feature. But this is hardly the place for that.

As a matter of fact, in a few dialects of Nepali, especially in colloquial styles, such retroflex flaps change further into dental taps (called *rakārībhavana* by B. Pokharel, pp. 140-141). Maybe this *rakārībhavana* is not an isolated phenomenon in Nepali after all. It is quite likely that a more general socio-stylo-dialectal rule of the following type is operative in these dialects of Nbpali:

*S-rule*



Disregard of the above facts seems to have marred the quality of an otherwise excellently written paper by B. Pokharel.

M. Pokharel's article (*'nepālīmā balāghāta ra suralahara'*, pp. 143-159) deals with stress and intonation in Nepali. The study represents the research findings on the topic of stress as epitomised in the writings of Professor Daniel Jones and the phoneticians of his generation -- published mostly in the late 1950's. References are no doubt made to works ranging from the ancient Sanskrit writings such as the Vedas down to the modern English works published in the late 1970's, but



unfortunately the recent findings do not seem to be incorporated into the main body of the paper. Attention may therefore be drawn to an early work of Peter Ladefoged (*Three Areas of Experimental Phonetics*, London: Oxford University Press) wherein it is demonstrated with conclusive evidence that prevailing opinion on the nature and definition of stress and its physiological correlates is simply untenable.

In a 17-page article, M. Pokharel devotes a total of 12 pages to the summary — discussion of works of eminent phoneticians on the topic (a conscientious reader had better consult the original works themselves!) and only two-and-a-half pages each to stress and intonation in Nepali. What is most irksome is that almost every second sentence of M. Pokharel is a paraphrase-summary of ideas of one linguist or the other (p. 146 consists of 17 lines and about the same number of sentences, but it contains allusions to a total of 9 references in the form of footnotes -- to cite only one example).

On p. 155, the reader is left with the unsubstantiated information that three types of stress -- syllabic, assimilatory, and sentence--may be recognised in Nepali. Little, however, is said by way of elaboration of the tripartite division, except that the sentence stress is described as if it were emphatic stress (p. 156).

Questions like the following raise themselves: Is stress phonemic in Nepali? What syllable patterns exist in Nepali? What is the relationship between stress and syllabic pattern in Nepali? What stress-placement rules are needed in Nepali? What is the relationship of vowel length (phonemic / non-phonemic?) and stress in Nepali? Do the stressed syllables cause vowel reduction in Nepali? If so, how much, or how little?, and so on. To attempt to address the above



questions would make serious contributions to the rather neglected areas of Nepali phonetics and phonology.

M. Pokharel's paper is full of serious misprints -- far too many to be listed here. Technical terms like *tāna* 'tone', *śura* 'pitch', and *śvara* 'vowel' or 'human voice' or 'accent' are indiscriminately used (pp. 156-158) and it is difficult to ascertain as to which is which. The English phrase '(sound) attributes' is translated into Nepali variously as (a) *dhvaniḡuṇaharū* (p. 143), (b) *dhvaniḡradaharū* (p. 158), and (c) *dhvaniḡrerakharū* (p. 159). In the same breath, 'prosodic features' is translated both as *chāḡdika śvarūpa* (p. 150) and *dhvaniḡuṇaharū* (p. 143); while 'suprasegmentals' is also translated as *dhvaniḡuṇaharū*. It is true that these terms are on occasions used interchangeably, but it would pay to begin to use them consistently.

The scholarly apparatus of M. Pokharel is of epic proportions -- it contains a total of 106 references cited as footnotes. It would seem then that although M. Pokharel lacks logical rigor and originality, he has acquired the outward semblance of respectable research.

Tripathi's paper ('*yāśkako nirvacana siddhānta ra upādeyatā*', pp. 185-211) provides an excellent summary-description of Yāśka's theory of etymology as propounded in his *Nirukta*. The *Nirukta* of Yāśka was composed around 700 B.C. as a subsidiary to the study of the Vedas. In other words, the *Nirukta* was composed in order to explain and interpret the collections of difficult Vedic words (known as the *Nighaṇṭu*) by means of proposing derivations of these words from roots as would suit the sense.

Tripathi's paper is both scholarly and clear. Like Ghimire's study (in this volume), the present study would

also prove immensely useful to those linguists of Nepal who are less knowledgeable about the ancient Sanskritic grammatical tradition. It is regrettable that the importance of Yāska's theory of etymology for the linguistic analysis of Nepali is only stated (pp. 210-211) and not demonstrated.

Ghimire's rather lengthily titled paper (*vedakā bhāṣāko artha nirdhāraṇamā āghāta praṇālīko bhūmikā ra nepālī lagāyata anya paścātkālina bhāṣāmā āghātako lopako kāraṇa*'), pp. 233-244) deals with the phenomena of accent (resulting from pitch variation) in Vedic Sanskrit. Ghimire proposes to accomplish two major goals: (i) to analyse the chief characteristics of the Vedic accentual system and to determine the impact of accent on the meaning of a morpheme, word, phrase, or sentence in Vedic Sanskrit; (ii) to account for the causes of the loss of the device indicating marked accentuation in the written texts of Nepali (and other "later" languages). The author succeeds ably in the first goal, except for a minor but nonetheless significant point that one may want to quibble over. This concerns the placing of short *u* above the accented syllable (i.e. raised in pitch) of the Vedic words *satyam* and *jyestha* cited (p. 241) in order to illustrate the semantic change that is caused by pitch variation in these words. For instance, one cannot ascertain whether the word *satyam* pronounced with high pitch (i.e. *udatta āghāta*) on the first syllable means 'true' or 'poverty'. Granted that this confusion may be due to typographical error, but no where in the text does the author explain the difference explicitly.

As regards the reasons leading to the loss of marked accentuation in written Nepali, the author hurriedly lists a set of six main reasons at the very end of the paper (p. 244), and offers no elaboration of them.

In spite of these minor shortcomings, Ghimire's paper will be read with profit by those linguists of Nepal who are less knowledgeable about the accentual system of Vedic Sanskrit.

To conclude, printed in India by a certain Deepak press, Benaras, and published by the Royal Nepal Academy of Nepal, PVBC is rather poorly edited. Or, to be correct, PVBC displays no palpable mark of having been edited at all, and it contains innumerable typographical errors -- sometimes to the detriment of understanding -- and inconsistent spellings. While the printed essays have been allowed to retain the original spelling system as employed by individual authors (and with good reason), inconsistent spellings of a given Nepali word within an individual essay itself are not hard to come by (e.g. *viśleṣana* vs. *viśleśana*; *ārko* vs. *arke*; *śabdabodha* vs. *śābdabodha* -- to cite only a few examples). One may wonder if this phenomenon would point to the absence of a stable and standardized spelling system of the Nepali language. English words have been 'Devanagarised' with carelessness (e.g. *introdaksana* vs. *introdakśana*; *inglisa* vs. *ingliša*; *suprāsegmentals* vs. *suprāsegmentals*, etc.).

There is a certain politics of language that the editor wishes to preach through PVBC ('editorial', and p. 2). About which for reasons nonlinguistic the least said the best.

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