

LANGUAGE POLITICS IN NEPAL

- Dr. Ram Kumar Dahal

(This article in brief aims at studying some important linguistic concepts, linguistic and socio-cultural milieu of Nepal; role of Nepali language, language in the unification of Nepal; Language planning in Nepal, ethnicity, national integration and Language Politics; attitudes towards spoken language and the medium of instruction; decline or decay of small language of Nepal; politics of link Language standardization and modernization of Language politics and political parties and language politics in Nepal.)

Introduction :

The worldwide process of democratization, privatization, liberalization and the recent global thrust on peace and democracy through popular mass participation have affected, as in other countries, the Language politics in Nepal. The politics of foreign aid which Nepal is receiving from all corner of the world, the growing number of NGOs and INGOs and several other factors have complicated the Language politics in Nepal.

As Language is a voluntary vocal system of communication and purely a socio cultural phenomena, politics, being its unit of the entire social system, does not remain unaffected by Language Socio Psycho Linguistics has Language is a powerful means for the politicians to communicate and propagate their ideas; an effective means to enjoy power and a powerful media for central decision making, its study in politics becomes a subject of prime importance. Politics is highly affected by various linguistic factors. It is of great practical significances to study which Language (first/mother tongue or second Language, dialect or register, native or foreign Language standard or non-standard Language pidgin or cocole, or any other varieties of Language) a citizen speaks or is forced to speak for social advancement and politico-economic development. It is generally accepted that the recognition of a particular Language in a civil and political society is an important aspect of the directly legitimatization of a particular culture, values, history and a lot of socio-economic and political factors. It is also found that where Language is politically relevant, one speech community is an ethnic or linguistic minority suppressed by generally perceived as alien/foreign conqueror or oppressing elite. In these cases, especially in the Third World countries which are being colonialized by Western

powers, to speak the Language of the rulers is a practical difficulty and essentially a symbol of political domination and unfreedom. Linguists have repeatedly pointed out that language would turn out to be correlated with other socio-cultural symbols/factors of which religion and ethnicity are of high importance.

It is also found that linguistic groups/speech communities have become important centres for the focusing of revolutionary, or at least protest politics in most modern societies. Linguistic cleavages, after class and religion, are supposed to be the most important source of conflict in modern politics. Political movements or conflicts in most of the countries, particularly in Belgium, Romania, Spain, the UK, the former Yugoslavia and for colonies of the UK and now the common wealth nations, are found based mainly on speech communities/linguistic groups. Language politics as Robertson puts is even more complex in the Third world countries, because might be an important factor in the attempt to construct a national unity out of a political system that is really only the result of imperialist map makers. It was also seen in the past that national unity and integration sometimes could be achieved by the common use of a foreign Language, particularly the Language of the former imperialist powers in some colonized countries. (Robertson : 1993: 273-74). Due to the multiplicity of the speech communities/local language, Indian constitution makers included, Hindi as the national Language and English as the auxiliary Language at least for fifteen years and intended to standardize Hindi all over India but India failed to do that and both English and Hindi are equally used as language of official business.

In most of the modern societies, as Robertson puts, language politics is sometimes deeply resented by residents of the relevant Language area which have accepted political assimilation with speakers of the dominant tongue, which is supposed to be the standard Language and the lingua franca in most parts of the state, and which regard adherence to the indigeneous Language as atavistic or even merely nostalgic (Robertson, 1993: 274).

Language politics is an important area of study because human thoughts, views, conflicts are reflected and restricted by Language It is generally believed that it would be more rational to define political culture around Language than most other cleavage patterns and this may account for the virulence of politics of the various speech communities (Robertson, 1993: 274).

Language is related with leadership pattern which is a quality which signified the ability of a person or a group of people to persuade others to act by inspiring them and making them believe the a proposed

course of action is the correct one (Robertson : 1993: 275-76). Language is a powerful means for the politicians for the expression of political power, political interests, ideology and values. It is an effective medium of interest articulation and aggregation. It is seen during the parliamentary polls that those leaders who can express their views clearly before the masses during the public gatherings can win more public support. Language can easily manipulate media, particularly TV and Radio. The choosing of words by the political actors reflect the mode of this thinking, programs, working style, capacity, vision and a number of factors. It is a powerful means of political communication. Karl Deutsch; has called the communication as the nerves of government (Deutsch: 1963).

Language as Khullar points out, is the most powerful factor in bringing the elite and the masses together, resolving regional disparities and strengthening social and national integration. It makes a scientific and technical knowledge easily accessible to the people in their own language and thus helps in the progress of industrialization as also the creation of scientific outlook (Khullar: 1995: 112-24).

Language, as Geertz opines, has sometimes been held to be the altogether essential axis of nationality conflicts, it is worth stressing that linguism is not an inevitable outcome of linguistic diversity. As indeed kinship race and other factor, Language differences need not in themselves be particularly divisive. Region, religion, custom and other factors are closely associated with it. (Geertz: 1994: 23-34). Politics is largely determined by the Language and linguistic factors. The politics of Language in Nepal would not be accurately understood until the adequate study of some of the linguistic factors, particularly the branch of socio linguistics which explores the relationship among various linguistic factors like people, nation, speech communities, nationalism, varieties of Language like register and so on. (Trudgil: 1976). It is also essential to understand properly the varieties of Language in Nepal in which the dialects register, First, second and foreign language and lingua franca would be seriously studies. Politics taken different shapes and forms in monolingual, bilingual and multi lingual speech communities. Nepal is a multilingual society in which multilingual speech communities interact among themselves. So, it would be better to have a brief study of some of the important linguistic concepts that affect the politics of a nation. Modern linguists have defined modern linguistics as the scientific study of Language (Carrol: 1953; Tiwari, 1985; Robins; 1971; Hockett: 1970, Bhattarai, 1995; Rai, 1995). Socio linguistics, a branch of modern linguistics, advocate that language is closely interrelated with society and with several social factors like class, caste, sex, social context,

geography and so on (Trudgil: 1976). A language always interacts with nationality, ethnic groups and several other social factors. Sociolinguistics in particular tries to explore and comprehend the study of the structure and use of Language in its social and cultural context; it explores its socio cultural values; studies all aspects of the relationship between Language and society. The socio linguistics study such matters as the linguistic identity of social groups, social attitudes of Language, standard and non standard forms of Language, the patterns and needs of national Language use, social varieties and levels of Language the social basis of multi-lingualism and so on (Crystal, 1985: 281). As one of the social sciences, politics certainly is affected directly by sociolinguistic factors. The sociology of language has particularly to be studied in establishing its relation with politics (Fishman, 1972). With the emergence of new horizons (Lyons, 1970), the field of modern linguistics has become more and more broader day by day (Lyons, 1970). The study of the foundation of language, including its biological one, is gaining currency in these days. (Leenberg, 1977).

Linguistic and socio-cultural Milieu of Nepal :

In order to understand the politics of language accurately, it would be appropriate to make a bird's eye view of the linguistic and socio-cultural position of Nepal. As language is determined by several factors, the sociology of the Nepalese languages, the sociological and linguistic factors effecting the language position of Nepal have particularly to be studied. Nepal is a small landlocked country. It is one of the poorest countries of the world having limited economic capability. Socially speaking, it is a multi lingual, multi racial, multi ethnic and multi cultural pluralistic society. Cultural heterogeneity and linguistic plurality are closely related in the Nepalese society which is, as outlined by Bista, its unique characteristics feature. (Bista: 1967). The important ethnic group/castes of Nepal, as government statistics point out, are Yadav, Ahir, Kayastha, Kumhar, Bania, Dhobi, Sudhi, Kalwar, Kurmi, Brahman (Terai), Rajput, Tharu, Teli, Kushuha, Muslim, Haluwai, Mazzah, Rajbanshi, Dhimal, Gangain, Marwadi, Bengali, Dhanuk, Shikha, Dushadh, Chamar, Khatway, Musahar, Kewat, Rajbhar, Kanu, others (Terai Brahman hill) Cheetri, Thakuri, Sanyasi, Newar, Limbu, Rai, Gurung, Thakali, Tamang, Magar, Danuwar, Jirel, Majhi, Sunwar, Gaine, Chepang, Kumal, Choroute, Bote, Lepcha, Raute, Dara, Raji, Thami, Damai, Kami, Sarki, Wadi, others (hill) Sherpa, Bhote, others (mountain) and some castes (foreigners) not stated (CBS, 1996: 21-24).

Nepal is a multi religious society where the majority Hindus (86.51%) are followed by Buddhists (7.78%), Islam (3.53%), Kiranti

(1.72%), Christian (0.17%), Jain (0.04) and others (0.14) (CBS, 1996: 18). Regarding the number of language spoken in Nepal, there is no uniformity among the government and non-government statistics. A government statistics published in 1996 reveal that there are altogether 32 big or small language spoken in Nepal which are Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Newari, Gurung, Tamang, Abadhi, Thari, Magar, Limbu, Rai/Kirati, Sherpa, Thakali, Rajbansi, Satar, Danuwar, Santhal, Hindi, Urdu, Chepang, Thami, Bengali, Majhi, Dhimal, Jhangar, Marwadi, Kumhala, Darai, Jirel, Byanshi, Raji, English. The statistics also include 495,862 speakers of other local language and 8302 speakers of others foreign language (CBS, 1996: 19020).

Other individual and non-governmental researches reveal the number of such language to as more than 70 whereas the government statistics put the number different in different periods, 36 in 1952-54 population census: 17 in 1971, 18 in 1981 and 19 in 1991. The unreliability of the government statistics/data and the lack of reliable linguistic survey have created confusions in this direction. Linguists claim that the language spoken in nepal (except Kusunda) belong to four major Language families Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidians (Yadav, 1996: 233-39).

The various mother tongues spoken in Nepal can be classified as 14 Indo-Aryan, 20 Tibeto-Burman and one each of the Munda and Dravidian families. The proportion of the population speaking an Indo-Aryan Language has increased from 77.5% in 1952/54 to 80% in 1991, while the figure for Tibeto-Burman speakers has declined from 21.9% to 17% during the same period. The number of Nepali speakers more than doubled from 4 million to 9.3 million during 1952/54-1991 (Gurung, 1997: 495-532). Linguists reveal that there are altogether half a dozen writing systems/scripts in contemporary language of Nepal out of which Devnagari is the most commonly used script. Nepali and few other language are written in this script. The genetic affiliation of Kusunda, as Yadav has pointed out, is yet to be identified. (Yadav, 1996: 233-239). Thus, linguistic plurality and cultural heterogeneity, as leading sociologists point out, are the important socio-cultural characteristics of Nepalese society (Bista: 1967).

The changing nature of cultural identity in Nepal with the focus on ethnicity and politics, the formation of Nepal as a nation state; Hinduization and Nepal's reliance on India symbols for national identity; social composition of Nepal and the political expression of ethnic issue and several other factors had direct impact in the languages of Nepal. The formulation of Nepalese history and the interpretation of Nepalese culture, as Gurung opines, has been very much the construct of

dominant castes. Thus, Nepalese socio-cultural discussion has remained a monologue with no voice from below until recently. The marginal groups or the ethnic minorities and their languages remained almost backward. The Gorkhali army during the unification period, had a multi-ethnic character, being composed of Khas-Bahun commanders and tribal followers. After Hinduization in the hills gained momentum after the Muslim onslaught from the tenth century onward, the growth of languages also centered on this line. In the central hills, Newar, Gurung, Tamang, in the eastern hills, Thulung-Rai, Newahang-Rai, Yakha and in the southern plains of Terai, different ethnic groups had developed different languages (Gurung, 1997: 495-532).

Role of Nepali Language in the Unification of Nepal :

Nepali Language had played important role in the unification of Nepal. The inhabitants of Gorkha welcomed Drabya Shah simply because they no longer wanted the Magar kings to be continued in power. The majority Nepali-speaking community and Khasa rulers/Rajas of the small principalities, i.e. Vaises and Chaubeses voluntarily and psychologically accepted the dominance of Khas culture and Nepali language under Gorkha rule of King Prithvi Narayan Shah who gave protection to Nepali Language. The non-Newari Khas speakers felt the feeling of security within Gorkha empire.

Linguists have accepted that, after the completion of the unification process, the process of modernization started in Nepali Language. The Shah rulers wanted to strengthen Nepali Language and gave special protection to it which was not given to others language. Linguistically and culturally speaking, the shahs (1722-1846) and the Ranas both (1846-1950) gave special protection to Nepali language and encouraged the process of modernization and standardization in it, neglecting rest of the language of the kingdom. Consequently, Nepal faced no cultural and linguistic conflicts in the post-Rana period as it was the case during the period of Prithvi Narayan Shah. During the Rana period, literary works like the standardization of literatures, dictionary preparation/making and codification in Nepali Language were encouraged. Nepali Bhasa Prakashini Samiti performed several important works in this field, however, Nepali received special protection in this direction.

With the introduction of multiparty democracy in Nepal in 1951, Nepali Language continued to play dominant role in governmental and non-governmental levels. However, Hindi also played important role in Terai where it became the means of instruction in most of the schools and colleges from 1957. Nepali, Hindi, English as separate disciplines were also studied in Language groups in class 9 and 10.

Language Planning and Policy in Nepal :

The study of language politics would be completely inadequate without the proper study of language planning/policy and programmes adopted by the various government of Nepal. Language planning, as Crystal points out, is a term used in socio linguistics to refer to a systematic attempt to solve the communication problems of a community by studying the various languages or dialects it uses and developing a realistic policy concerning the selection and use of different languages (Crystal, 1985: 174). Language planning and policy, thus, are the important aspects of language politics.

With the introduction of multiparty democracy in Nepal in 1950, various linguistic communities tried to uplift their languages. Hindi in Terai and Newari in Kathmandu Valley took the leading roles. During 1950-60, these languages enjoyed almost freedom, though K.I. Singh Government ordered the removal of other languages from school instruction except Nepali (however some optional languages were prescribed in class 9 and 10). With the forceful dissolution of the first democratically government in 1960 and with the introduction of non-party oriental democracy in 1962, the Panchayat system in the name of national integration and extreme nationalism under King Mahendra, developed the concept of Nepali nationalism/Nepalism and "one nation, one system" concept of which Nepali Language became the part. Language actually was not studied in linguistic sense but in socio-political sense. It also stressed on the representation of one Language system. In course of inculcating oriental non-party culture, politics and linguistic sentiments went side by side and linguistic issues remained highly related with political issues. It tried to Panchayatize the Language culture, and ethnicity. Besides Nepali Language the Panchayati rulers discouraged other cultural and linguistic sentiments. In practice, no investment on the development of Language was done. Royal Nepal Academy (RNA) and few other research institutes conducted intellectual research works for the study and survey of other language. Till its alleged involvement in assisting the Tibetans' Free Tibet Movement and the Khampa revolutionaries, the US based summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) conducted linguistic research on language on eastern parts of Nepal. The Panchayati rulers never accepted Nepal as the multi lingual society, however, some research works were conducted during this period. They never considered Language as national property and never stressed on its preservation.

The concept of democratic pluralism was not encouraged in politics, philosophy and virtually in language also. Nepali language was used as a medium for the expression of political views and desires by

the non-party Panchayat politicians. Thus, language and politics was closely inter related. The Panchayati leaders stressed on the development of Nepali language as the lingua franca of the nation. Article 4 of the constitution of Nepal, 1962 gave Nepali 'the status of national language, however, it did not mention about the position of other languages. Though Article 10 of the constitution had provided the Nepalese citizens the right to equality, it did not specify about linguistic equality (HMG, 1962: 6). During 1962-89, Nepali became the medium of instruction, of media of parliamentary debates, of deliberations of the court etc. Derecognition of Local Languages, thus, remained the linguistic feature during the Panchayat period.

The New Education Plan (NEP), introduced in 1971, discouraged the medium of instruction in school in other languages than Nepali, however, some local languages including Hindi and Newari were prescribed in class 9 and 10 as optional subjects.

The Marich Man Singh Government, while stressing on one "nation, one language" formula, derecognised the degree of M.A. in Hindi, Newari and Maithili as a basis of promotion. Except Nepali and English, no other languages were recognised by the Public Service Commission (PSC). The linguistic minorities charged the government-owned Sajha Prakashan (SP) and Royal Nepal Academy (RNA) had not done justice with their languages. Publication of Newspapers other than Nepali and English were also discouraged. Radio Nepal stopped the news broadcast in Hindi and Newari. (Jha, 1993: 25). Except Hindi movement, as advocated by Gajendra Narayan Singh the, leader of the then Nepal Sadbhavana Parishad and Manka Khala movement advocated by Padma Ratna Tuladhar, Nepal faced no important language movements during the Panchayat period. The leaders of the language movements, particularly Padma Ratna Tuladhar, Gajendra Narayan Singh and Ananda Dev Bhatta, criticized the language policy of the Panchayat governments and strongly demanded the implementation of liberal language policy that gave equal protection to all the languages of the nation, besides Nepali. But those personalities during the post Jana Andolana days turned into political activists that brought language and politics into closer ties.

With the restoration of multi party and pluralistic democracy on West Minister line in 1990, Nepal started adopting liberal language policy. Soon after the formation of a multi party interim government under the Prime-Ministership of K.P. Bhattarai, government own and controlled Radio Nepal started its news broadcast, besides in Nepali and in English, in Hindi and Newari. In the post Jana Andolana days (1990), the democratically elected governments of Nepal tried to

encourage the development and promotion of various languages of the nation and started its news broadcast in few other local languages including in Magar and Tamang. The government owned Nepal Television (NTV) also started the production of some telefilms on small screen in various local languages.

The publications of newspapers in various languages were also promoted and accordingly, few more newspapers were also published in various local languages. However, no additional facilities were provided to these publication from government side. The private sector is also taking interest in this direction.

The Nepalese Constitution (1990) and Official Language Policies :

The constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 framed after the mass uprising of 1990 constitutes the central and perhaps, the sole formal statement of Nepal's language policy-a policy that gives differential status and power to Nepalese languages which, in turn, gets reflected in institutional and societal support to attitudes towards these languages.

The supreme law has shown commitment for the preservation of all languages by providing equal status to all the languages of the nation but a clearcut distinction was marked between the national language and languages of the nation. Nepali language in the Devnagari script, under Article 6 (1) of the present constitution is accepted as the national language of Nepal and is granted the status of the official language. All the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the languages of the nation. Similarly, Article 18, providing cultural and education right of the citizens of Nepal, states that every community residing within the kingdom of Nepal shall have the right to protect and develop its language, script and culture. Every community is also given the right to establish schools for providing education to the children upto the primary level in their mother tongue (HMG 1990). The present constitution, thus, has accepted the basis norms as advocated by UNESCO and as mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 by accepting mother tongue education at primary level.

In the post Jana Andolana days, various languages, besides Nepali, have been used within parliament though House of Representatives Rules 2048 (1991) clearly mentions that Nepali should be the medium of expression, discussions and other deliberations. This rule has been violated by the MPS within parliament. MP Padma Ratna Tuladhar delivered speech in Newari, Gajendra Narayan Singh in Hindi, to mention a few The Kathmandu Municipality Mayor took oath in Newari.

The democratically elected governments of Nepal since 1991 have adopted liberal policy regarding the promotion of languages as outlined in the supreme Law (1990) in 1992 (2049 V.S.) the National Committee for Formulating cultural policy and programmes was constituted by the government, which, besides other things, recommended for the promotion and preservation of various cultures in Nepal (HMG, 1992). A year later National Language Policy Recommendation Commission (1993/2050 V.S.) was also constituted which recommended for the establishment of a separate body-National Language council to formulate appropriate language policies and for their proper implementation (HMG, 1993; Yadav, 1998: 233; Gurung, 1997: 495-532).

Ethnicity, National Integration and Language Politics :

There has been a strong argument among some of the leading linguists that in multi-lingual and multi cultural societies, diversity of cultures, languages and religious weaken the process of national integration, process of democratization, harmony and development. But the opponents of this assimilationist approach strongly advocate that cultural plurality or multiplicity, if materialized properly, politically and socially, can bring unity among the various linguistic and ethnic communities/groups; can promote or accelerate the pace of development, strengthen or consolidate the process of democratization and so on (Yadav, 1996: 233-239). With the restoration of multi-party pluralistic democracy in 1990, the latter is gaining currency in these days. The democratically elected governments of Nepal must try to promote the latter and must create a timely balance between linguistic pluralism and cultural multiplicity.

Scholars like Edward W. Said has tried to prove that the western writers, while outlining the western conceptions of the orient, have a negative attitude towards the oriental culture, language and undermine that they are backward. (Said, 1995). Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions and of other persons' works not through domination but by what Gramscically consent. In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as hegemony, an indispensable concept for any understanding the cultural life in the industrial west (Said; 1995: 7). The so called standard language or culture should not dominate the lesser developed ones, otherwise it would direct the society towards disintegration and fragmentation. HMG of Nepal should always encourage the process of socio-cultural democratization and liberalization.

Language and ethnicity were found mixed and went side by side in Nepal with nation's politics and never remained separate and independent entities.

In present day Nepal, the concept of regionalization is getting encouragement, particularly, with the development of regional parties in Nepal, the concept of regionalization was also encouraged in the field of language. Hindi is getting special position in Terai. Gore B. Khapangi recently have organized the mountain and hill ethnic and linguistic groups Se Ta Ma GuRaLi (Sherpa, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu) and has championed for the advocacy of their languages including their due share in politics. For them, language has become a powerful means to achieve their ends-to have a due share in the central decision making process. Kathmandu Mayor took oath in Newari and currently language is found more and more diversified. Kathmandu Municipal corporation has declared Newari as a language of the municipal areas. However, no government reactions have been expressed regarding the constitutionality and legality of such declaration. The municipalities at Rajbiraj, Janakpur and Nepalgunj are also said considering to give the same status to Bhojpuri, Maithili and Awadhi respectively.

Linguistic Minorities and Language Politics :

It is generally believed that the culture of a country is judged from the way it treats its minority groups and the way it gives respects to them. People's social, cultural, religious and political identity is linked with the language that they speak; that they think in and that they use to communicate. The term "linguistic minorities" is not defined in the present Nepalese constitution but the meaning of the expression would be clear from a reading of Article 18 which gives every community the right to protect develop its language, script and culture and to establish schools for providing education to the children upto the primary level in their mother tongue. (HMG: 1990) Article 26 (2) mentions that the state shall promote the language, literature, script, art and culture of all and Article 25 (3) further mentions that the state shall have the social objective of establishing a harmony amongst the various castes, tribes, religions, languages, colour and communities.

But linguist point out that in the name of development progress and national unity, as Nikhel Nayyer points out, indigeneous cultures have been destroyed leading to their marginalization in society. Language has been an important tool by which the state has sought to subjugate these peoples by denying them the right to use and develop their mother tongues. Language is manifestly part of culture. The state's purposive

interference with the mother tongues of tribal peoples has done tremendous violence to their culture in as much as culture is largely transmitted through language (Nikhel Nayyar, 1995: 166). The imposition of a dominant culture and language by a centralized leaders often become a problem in the Third World countries.

Attitudes Towards Spoken Languages and Medium of Instruction :

The study of attitudes towards spoken languages and the medium of instruction in educational institutions are important aspects of language politics. The use and practice of standard language in education system or linguistic or cultural hegemony as some linguists believe, led to an attitude of neglect, humiliation and depreciation to local/non-standard languages. Expressing their views regarding attitudes towards spoken languages in India, Saxena and ahendrao write-The concept of a standard languages has somehow reduced the spoken language to a symbol of backwardness... The whole education system has a very hostile and demeaning attitudes towards spoken languages. "They are innocent villages, they cannot speak, they do not have a language" are some of the humiliating expressions used by the people who are proficient in the standard language. Lack of knowledge of a particular standard language is many times reduced to not having a language... So even if there are primers in the mother tongue, since the teachers prefer to talk in the standard language and is hostile towards is students language, the purpose of making primers in mother tongue is totally defeated (Saxena and Mahendroo, 1995: 146). The middle class, at times overtly, and at other times subtly, use our command over a dominant language, or the language of the rulers, to subjugate and dominate the toiling masses. The rise of regional linguistic identities had developed themselves as a reaction to the domination of standard language (Saxena and Mahendroo, 1995: 144-157).

The present constitutional set up in Nepal is committed to safeguard the interests of all the linguistic minorities in Nepal. The chief feature of the present language policy is that it permits mother tongue instruction at primary stage (up to class five) and gradual switch over to modern standard languages-Nepali or English as a media of instruction at High school or at the university level. English in Nepal is a library language in higher education; language of the diplomatic transactions; language of the foreign advisors. In India also it was accepted that the use of English as the official language of the union must also not be discontinued until the non-Hindi states agree for such discontinuance (Kagzi, 1984: 1090).

Decline/Decay of Smaller Languages in Nepal :

HMG of Nepal, as some linguists and speech communities point out, has not shown positive attitude and encouragement for the development of small languages and writing systems/scripts of the smaller language groups. Some of the languages which have recently developed writing systems had received no government encouragement. There are a larger number of lesser known languages, as Yadav has pointed out, which are endangered and likely to die out in the lack of their use and documentation (Yadav, 1996: 233-239). In order to promote these lesser known languages, the government has certainly to play key role. With the increasing process of Nepalization, speakers of minority languages, as Yadav has opined, gradually tend towards adopting Nepali language and eventually losing their own mother tongues. Linguists opine that ten Rai languages have already decayed/died and another 12 Rai languages are on the verge of extinction (Yadav, 1996: 233-39). This is like, what Singh calls, the "suicide of language identity" or language death (Singh, 1995: 214-19). In the present pluralistic society, these lesser known languages are facing identity crisis from the so called standard languages. The present constitutional and legal provisions and measures under taken by HMG to promote and preserve the interests of the linguistic minorities (including the endangered linguistic groups) are not adequate. Some more practical and effective measures have to be under taken. The frequent changes of governments in Nepal had adversely affected this. Except those languages which have, rich written language tradition (Nepali, Maithali, Newari, Limbu), the smaller and lesser known languages comparatively need more government protection and encouragement to preserve their own identity.

The decline of language, as Orwell has pointed out, must ultimately have political and economic causes. In our time, political speech and writing are supposed to be largely the defence of the indefensible. In todays world, language cannot be kept out from politics. All issues are political issues and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, fully hatred and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad language must suffer (Orwell: 1985).

Politics of Link Language :

In the multi lingual society like Nepal, the study of inter community communication or Lingua Franca (LF) which is often reffered to as a link language or auxiliary language (Rai: 1995) becomes an important aspect of language politics. Linguistically speaking, LF is a term popularly used in Socio linguistics and often in every day speech

to refer to an auxiliary language used to enable routine communication to take place between groups of people who speak different native languages. (Crystal: 180). In simplest terms, a language which is used among the speakers of different languages is a LF, which can also be a native language of one of the group or it could be a language which is not spoken as the first or native language in one of the groups (Rai: 1995: 53). English is the world's most common lingua franca, followed by French but other languages are also widely used. In East Africa, Swahili in many parts of west Africa, Hausa is used (Crystal: 1985: 180).

Since the introduction of multi party democracy (MPD) in Nepal in 1950-51, Nepali was broadly used as the lingua franca among the different communities. In the hills and in the mountains, the speakers of the Tibeto-Burman languages, as Yadav points out, are often found to use Nepali as their link language. Educated native speakers of the Terai languages, in most cases tend to use Hindi as lingua franca for inter community communication (Yadav: 1996: 235).

The Bantawa, the Kulung and the Thulung dialects with the Rai community in some part of eastern hill districts and Bhojpuri and Maithili in some part of southern plains also limitedly perform this role. Sometimes, missing links are also seen in link language.

Politics of Language, Standardization and Modernization :

Lack of political will and several other factors have led to the consolidation of English language as the lingua franca and maximum use in higher administrative, political and diplomatic fields. Most of the languages of Nepal are facing problem of standardization. No doubt, Nepali, Newari, Rai and Maithili are rich in literary heritage but they have mostly amassed literary and religious vocabulary earlier usage which have restricted to certain social groups. These languages continue to discharge a prefunctionary role limited to routine communicative expressions. In certain areas of social communication, the languages of Nepal, except English, may become the medium of cultural expression whereas English dominates other technical and advanced fields, matters of higher educational research and development. Language, as Talgeri opines, cannot grow on their own to a standardized level of communication unless they have a determined state or institutional support (Talgeri: 1995: 201-205).

Linguists also express their dissatisfaction over the differences between the standard language and local dialects. Leading Indian linguist, Vara Vara Rao has opined that "There is nothing like standard language of the civil people and that the rest are dialects is the

language of the working class ? Why is it called a dialect ? Why is the language of is considered standard language ? Why is the Brahmin's language called a standard language and the working people's a dialect (Saxena and Mahendroo, 1995: 144-157). The present constitutional and legal system of Nepal has tried to escape from this inequality. Article 11 of the present Nepalese constitution provides right to equality to all citizens. Article 19, provides all linguistic communities to develop their languages and Article 6 considers all the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal as the languages of the nation (HMG: 1990)

The difference between standard language and local dialects in some cases generate movements which are symptomatic of the majority-minority, dominant-subordinate, privileged-underprivileged dynamics relating to ethnic, cultural, social and politico-economic spheres of life of a particular nation-state. It represents state intervention, in language programmes, policies and planning which have serious implication as far as issues of language vis a vis power, privilege economic and education opportunities and national regional identities are concerned (Saxena & Mahendroo: 1995: 144).

Regarding the standardization of language, teachers and the native speakers of a particular language differ much. The teachers, stressing the standardization of school text books, view that their students would remain backward if they are taught in debate or gaule Bhasa instead of a standard language. But others feel that the mother tongue should be used till the highest level for instruction examination and for other purposes (Saxena and Mahendroo: 1995: 144-157). The present Nepalese constitution, under Article 18, has provided the right to establish schools for providing education to the children upto the primary level in their mother tongue. But at the higher level only Nepali and English are used in practice. At the primary level, some mother tongue-schools are established but the constitutional provisions are yet to be realized due to several reasons including the lack of awareness.

The constitutional system in India particularly after the Eighth Schedule has tried to provide equal protection to all languages. Any member of Parliament can speak in his/her mother tongue; (Article 20) and simultaneous Translation facilities are provided she/he speaks in one of the recognized languages, one or more languages can be used in the state (Article 345), every person has the right to submit a representation for the redress of any grievance to any officer or authority of the Union or a State in any of the languages used in the Union or the State as the case may be (Article 350); every state and every local authority is directed to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the

mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups and the president may issue such direction to any state as he considers necessary for the security of subfacilities. Government of India has to work for the development of all the languages used in education; Radio, TV encourage artists and broadcast programs in languages and there are film awards separately for different languages (Sarkar, 1991: 409-10 quoted from Krishnamurti, 1995: 8-23). Since no state in India is equipped with translation facilities for translating from one language into another within the state, Article 350 is hardly implemented Article 350 A has not succeeded in promoting primary education (& literacy) in the mother tongue for linguistic minorities (Ibid).

The Nepalese constitution and the Parliament Rules, 2048 does not permit the MPS to speak in other languages except Nepali inside the Parliament but the Member of Parliament (MPS) in practice, have spoken in different languages, Hindi, Newari and so on.

Register and Language Politics :

Sociolinguists stress that effective communications demands not only the grammatically correct utterances but situationally appropriate also. Language has to be appropriate to the speaker receiver, situation and subject matter (Rai, 1995: 49). In this direction, the study of a register becomes particularly important. Linguistically speaking, as outlined particularly by latest socio linguists, register is a variety of language defined according to its use in social situations, e.g. a register of scientific, religious subjects (Rai, 1995: 49). The legal, political and constitutional registers for study used by politicians during their political gaming are important ones for study. The general people express their dissatisfaction over the fact that the language of law, constitution and other documents are not easily understandable to them. Political Register is no exception to this rule. Nepali alone is not enough to meet all the technical terms and for this reason, the use of English is growing day by day. The medical, legal, technical and other registers are flourishing these days in Nepal.

Political Language :

The rise of mass communications, of growth of large organizations and novel technologies, the invention of advertising and public relations, the professionalization of education all contributed to linguistic pollution, upsetting the ecological balance between words and their environment. In our time the purity of language is under unrelenting attack from every side from professors as well as from politicians, from newspapermen as well as from advertising men from men of

the cloth as well as from men of the sword, and not least from those indulgent compilers of modern dictionaries who profound the suicidal thesis that all usages are equal and all correct (Schlesinger Jr. 1985: 437-450).

The linguistic environment is largely determined by a nation's existing political environment. Politics in basic aspects is a symbolic and therefore a linguistic phenomenon. Social fluidity, moral pretension political and literary demagoguery corporate and academic bureaucratization, and a false conception of democracy, as Orwell opines, are leading us into semantic chaos. Every political movement generates its own language field (Orwell; 1985: 420-436).

Every political movements as Schlesinger points out, generates its own language field. Language field legitimizes one set of motives, values and ideals and banishes the rest. The language field of the American Founding Fathers directed the American consciousness toward one constellation of standards and purposes. The language field of Vietnam and Watergate has tried to direct the national consciousness toward very different goals (Schlesinger Jr. 1985: 437-450).

Language reflects the existing socio-economic and political conditions of a particular nation-state. Special relation/connection between politics and debasement of language, as Orwell opines, has been clearly pointed out by linguists (Orwell; 1985: 420-36). Most modern writing is supposed to be "sheer humbug" consisting of nothing more than "long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else. Modern political writings and language are supposed to be bad. In the words of George Orwell (Orwell; 1985, 429).

"In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a party line ..." The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles manifestos, white papers and the speeches of under secretaries do, of course, vary from party to party but they are all alike in that one almost never finds than a fresh, vivid, home-made turn of speech when one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases. The desire for success at the polls, as Arthur Schlesinger has pointed out, have sentimentalized and cheapened the language of politics, thus worsening the quality of language. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language when simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches of pleasure of power and of praise ... words are perverted to stand for things which are not (Schlesinger, 1985: 437-450). Political factors thus are responsible for

the rise and fall of languages. It is believed that the overall corruption in the governmental machinery may led to corruption in the field of language. German, Russian and Italian languages, as Orwell points out, have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship. But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation and among people who should and do not know better. The debased language that has been discussed is in some ways very convenient (Orwell: 1985).

English Language Politics :

Though the present constitutional set up does not mention the role of English in Nepal, it has, in practice as in other Third World countries, become a language of mass media of the library, of science and technology and other higher educational institutions of diplomatic business, of higher level academic and research institutions of top level academic interactions, seminars, symposium etc. and registers level languages. In practice, English has undermined the role of other languages. Though English is compulsorily taught in schools from primary level up to BA. It becomes difficult for most of the educated and uneducated people to communicate in English with the foreigners. The high level administrators and ministers are often said to have facing English language problem. While dealing with the foreigners, the secretaries and ministers who have no command over English language cannot properly communicate with the foreigners and assert on national interest due to their language weaknesses. They never realize that they are weak in English language. To have a bilingual becomes a matter of prestige for them. This eventually affects the national interest of Nepal.

Political Parties and Language Politics in Nepal :

In order to study the language politics, it would be essential to have a bird's eye view on the views and attitudes of various political parties of Nepal towards. The principal political parties of Nepal after the restoration of Multi Party Democracy (MPD) in 1990, held almost similar views regarding languages. The election manifestos published during the May Polls (1991) and the mid term elections (1995) almost showed similar views regarding languages. Both the Nepali Congress (NC), and the Madhav Nepal and KP Oli-led communist party of Nepal- Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN UML), the partners during the historic mass uprising (1990) had tried to encourage the development of all the languages of the nation. The two Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPPS) of the same name led by two Surya Bahadur, Lokendra Bahadur ex Prime Minister during Panchayat period S.B. Thama, LB Chand held almost similar views (NC: 1991, CPN UML 1991, NDPS: 1991).

The Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) in particular is aggressive in attacking the monopoly of Nepali language in practice. Its manifesto, published in Hindi and English only, was in favour of ending discriminations in all sectors/fields including in the field of languages (NSP: 1991). It had followed the tradition developed by Nepal Tarai Congress (NTC).

The NTC since its establishment in 1951, gave a clarion call for the recognition of Hindi as a second national language of Nepal. Among the linguistic communities in Terai, the Hindi movement took a dramatic turn in 1956 when K.I. Singh led United Democratic Party (UDP) Government articulated to pose certain challenge Hindi by issuing a government directive which aimed at the removal of Hindi from the school education. "Save Hindi committees were formed to support Hindi Movement (Gaige: 1975: 111; Jha, 1993: 21-35) which was supported by important parties during that period-NC, CPN, UDP and Nepal Praja Parishad (NPP) (Gaige: 1975). In 1957, V.N. Jha stated that "we will not allow the removal of Hindi from the medium of education". During the Panchayat days, Hindi remained neglected and the New Education Plan introduced in 1971 discouraged education in Hindi medium further (Mishra: 1990). Hindi was prescribed in class 9 and 10 as an optional subject.

The NSP, thus, advocates the recognition of Hindi in Terai. The language policy of newly established and Bam Dev Gautam and C.P. Mainali led CPN Marxist Leninist Party is yet to come out.

Conclusion :

Though favourable environment did not exist during the Panchayat period for the development of all the languages, the recent political set up (constitutional, legal and political) has encouraged for this.

References :

- Williams, G. 1992, *Socio Linguistics*. London : Routledge.
- Brass, Paul R. *Linguistics, Religion and Politics in Nepal India*. London : OUP, 1974
- Pramod Talguri, *The Fate of India Languages ... The need for Standardization and Modernization of Language and the State: Perspectives on The Eight Schedule*. New Delhi : Creative Books, 1995.
- Infrastructure in R.S. Gupta et. al (edt.) 201-205.*
- Srivastava, R.N. et. al 1978, *Evaluating Communicability in Village Settings*. UNICEF.
- Pattanayak, DP 1991, *Multilingualism in India*. *Multilingual Matters*, 61.
- Grierson, J.A. 1886-1924 *Linguistic Survey of India*. Reprinted 1977, Motilal Benarsidass, Delhi.
- Palmer, Norman D. *The Indian Political System*.

- Mishra, Krishna Chandra, Nepalki Bhasa Samasya Samadhan Ya Takaran ? Kya Chahate Hain Aap ? (in Hindi), 1990, no page.
- Gaige, Grederick H. Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, 1975.
- Jha, Hari Bansh, The Terai Community and National Integration in Nepal, Kathmandu : Centre of Economic and Technical Studies (CETS) and Friederich Ebert Stiftung (FES), 1993. PP. 21-35.
- Giglioli, P. Socio-Linguistics : An Introduction, Penguin, 1976.
- Hudson, Ra, Socio-Linguistics, OUP, 1981.
- Gumperge and Hyme (ed.), Directions in Socio-Linguistics, Holt-Rinehart-Welson, 1972.
- Trudgil, Peter, Socio-Linguistics : An Introduction, Penguin, 1976. Books, England.
- Fishman, JA, The Sociology of Language, The Hague Mouton USA, 1972.
- Lado, R. Linguistics Accross Culture, Michigan : University of Michigan Press, 1961.
- Leenberg, E.H. Biological Foundation of Language, USA John Wiley 1977.
- Lyons J (ed.) New Horizens in Linguistics, Penguin, 1970.
- Crystal, David, A Dictionary of linguistics and phonetics, New York, Basil Blackwell, 1985.
- Linguistics, England Penguin Book 1990 3rd ed. New Delhi.
- Tiwari Bhola Nath, Aadhunik Bhasa Vigyan, India Lipi Prakashan, 1985.
- Malla, Kamal P., The Road to Nowhere, Kathmandu : Sajha Prakashan, 1979.
- Hockett, Charles F. A course of Modern Linguistics, New Delhi, 1970.
- Shailendra K. Sikngh "Suicide of Language identity" R.S. Gupta et. al.op.at P. 214-219.
- NESCO 1953 "The use of verbacular languages in Education" Monograph Series 8 paris.
- Barnrd, F. Herder on Social and Political Culturc, Cambridge : University Press, 1969.
- Barth F. Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, Boston : Little Brown, 1968.
- Das Gupta, Gyotirindra, Language Conflict and National Development Group Politics and National Language Policy in India, Bombay OUP, 1970.
- Khub Chandani, Lachman M., Plural Languages, Plural Cultures, Communication, Identity and Socio Political Change in Contamporary India Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press An East West Book Centre, 1983.
- HMG, 1992/2049 VS "Rastriya Sanskritik Niti Tatha Karyakram Tarjuma Samitidware. Prastut Prativedan" (The Report submitted by National Commitee for formulating cultural policy & Programmes. Mimeographed.
- Recommendation Commission's Report Kath. HMG.
- Gurung Harka (1966) Faces of Nepal Kath : Himal.
- Malla K.P. 1989, Language and society in Nepal in Malla ed. Nepal Perespectives and Community and change. Kath. CNAS, 1989.
- Carroll, JB The Study of Language Cambridge Mass. 1953.
- Robbins, m General Linguistics. An Introductory Survey, II ed. A Longman Paperback London : Longman Group Ltd. 1971 (Chap. 9 Linguistics and Anthropology).
- RAI, Vishnu S. Fundamentals of Appled Linguistics Biratnagar : Nagar Publication, 1995 Revised Edt.
- Bhattarai, Govinda Raj An Introduction to Linguistics Kath : Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1995 4th Edt.)
- Y.P. Yadav, "Multicultural Milliu in Nepal A social Resources for Nep." in Journal of Nepalese studies, vol. 1, No. 2, 1996, PP. 233-240.
- R.S. Gupta, Anvita Abbi & Kailash S. Aggrawal Language and the State : Perspectives on the Eight Schedule New Delhi : creative Books, 1995.
- R.Bh. Krishnamurti, "Official Language Policies : with special References to the Eight schedule of the constitution of India" in R.S. Gupta et. al.op.at. P. 8-23.
- E. Annamalai, "Language and the Indian Constitution", *Ibid*, PP. 24-27.
- Sadhna Saxena and Kamal Mahendru, "Politics of Language" in R.S. Gupta, Anvita and Kailash S. Aggrawal (ed.) Language and the state perspectives on the Eighth schedule, New Delhi : creative Books, 1995.
- Cliefford Geertz, "Primordial and civic Ties" reproduced from "The Integrative Revolution : Primordial sentiments and civil politics in the New states" in clifford Geertz (ed.) old societies and New States : The Oust for Modernity in Asia and Africa New York : Free Press, 1963, PP. 107-13, reproduced in John Hitchinson and Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism, Oxford : OUP, 1994, PP. 29-34, Harka Gurung, "State and Society in Nepal (Chap. 15) in David N. Gellner, Joanna PFaff-Czamecka and John Whelpton, Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom : The politics of culture in contemporary Neal Amsterdam : Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997, Pp. 495-532.
- David Roborston, Dictionary of Politics, London : Penguin Books, 1993, Second Edition, (PP. 273-74).
- Edward W. Said, Orientalism : Western Perceptions of the Orient, London : Penguin Books, Reprinted in 1995.
- TOBA S. 1992 Language Issues in Nepal Kath : Saandan Books & Stationers.
- Eastman, C.M. 1983 Language Planning : an Introduction San Francisco : Chandler & Sharp Publishers.
- CBS, 1952-4 Population Consus Kath. HMG/CBS.
- CBS, 1971 Population Consus Kath. HMG/CBS.
- CBS, 1981 Population Consus Kath. HMG/CBS.
- CBS, 1991 Population Consus Kath. HMG/CBS.
- CBS, Statistical Pocket Book, Nepal in a nut shell Nepal : facts/Figures.
- Pattanayak, D.P. Multilingualism in India, Multilingual Malter 1991, 61.
- George Orwell "Politics and English Language" in Sheridan Baker and C. Jeril Howard (ed.) The Essavist, Fifth Edition, New York : Harper and Row Publishers, 1985.
- Arthur Schlesinger Jr "Politics and the American Language" in Baker and Howard(ed.), op.at.
- Bh. Krishnamurti, "Official Language Policies", in R.S. Gupta et.al, op.at.
- Singh, Sailendra K. "Suiside of Language entity" in *Ibid*.
- K.K. Khullar, "Language Development" in *Ibid*.
- Nikhil Nayyer, "The Eight Schedule and Tribal Languages" in *Ibid*.