

The Great Poet of Nepal

(A Biography of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota)



The Great Poet of Nepal

Narendra Raj Prasai

Translated by
Anukritika

Edited by
Anu Raj Joshi

Publisher: Trimurti Niketan
Post Box:11441, Kathmandu, Nepal
Telephone: 4771455, 4770580
Email: trimurtinepal@gmail.com
website: www.trimurtinepal.com.np
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The Great Poet of Nepal

A Biography of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota by Narendra Raj Prasai

Every author has his or her own significance and pattern of writing. Prasai's style of writing is unique and has the Narendra-ism approach. 'The Great Poet of Nepal' is full of sweet tenderness and any reader can smell the charming fragrance from the beginning till the end of the book. Strong sense of patriotism, use of proverbs along with interesting and sharp language, readable and realistic sentences are some of the originality and characteristics of Mr. Prasai's scripts. He has labored really hard to prepare this book along with a lot of research.

• **Prof. Dr. Basu Dev Tripathi**

I have contributed three literary works about the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota. Though there was much to be written about Devkota, I could not dedicate my time to write those things. Narendra Raj Prasai has a lot of courage and dedication; so, he could accomplish this work on Devkota. This work is of great magnitude and great significance. When I read 'The Great Poet of Nepal', I was nostalgic and felt as if I could hear Devkota talk and walk along with me. Prasai's work on the biography of Devkota is noteworthy and it will be immortal in the field of Nepali literature.

• **Hari Shrestha**

The great poet Devkota is alive in Narendra Raj Prasai's book 'The Great Poet of Nepal'. The incidents of his life take place in front of our eyes as if we could touch them stretching our hands. The name 'Devkota' is very familiar and loved by the Nepalese society. The nonpareil creation of Prasai is indeed around the periphery of Devkota. The unique way in which the writer has presented the biography of Devkota is excellent.

• **Prof. Dr. Indra Bahadur Rai**

There was only limited information on the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota till now. Prasai has certainly raised curtains on Devkota. I read the manuscript of this book twice before its christening as 'The Great Poet of Nepal'. But, still, my thirst is not quenched of reading 'The Great Poet of Nepal'. The things I had known about Devkota when I was with him have appeared in this book. In addition, many facts and evidences that were often heard about but were not available in written form have also been included. The author's contribution is praiseworthy. I hope, this work will always be a source of inspiration and reference to those who appreciate the contributions of Devkota.

• **Kanchan Pudasaini**

The life history of Devkota written by Narendra Raj Prasai is of historical value. He has mentioned several memorable and remarkable incidents of Devkota's life. It also includes those facts that haven't been mentioned so far in any other books. This Devkota-centric volume is indeed the result of Prasai's tireless effort.

• **Prof. Dr. Kumar Bahadur Joshi**

A number of writers have written on the life history of Devkota. However, Prasai has made a precise study concerning Devkota. He has brought the facts not yet published. With his endless efforts and accurate proofs, he has falsified many wrong information on Devkota's life. Prasai's book has corrected such illusions on Devkota which were bad in taste and completely untrue.

• **Dr. Mod Nath Prashrit**

Information and incidents regarding Devkota were brought in light by a number of poets, writers and reporters. However, several such incidents were yet to be published. Narendra Raj Prasai's 'The Great Poet of Nepal' appears to be a strong creation and source of information on several unheard events of Devkota's life. This book has its significance in the field of Nepali biographical literature. 'The Great Poet of Nepal' has already garnered respect and popularity among the lovers of Nepali language and literature.

• **Prof. Rajendra Subedi**

No doubt, the Great Poet Devkota is an asset to the Nepali literary world. I have felt that Narendra Raj Prasai has created a wave in the field of Nepali literature through this lively book. 'The Great Poet of Nepal' has in fact revived and given rebirth to the Great Poet. This book can also be called as 'Devkota's Secrets'. Prasai's writing is very interesting and clear, that unfolds like stories which even the general public can understand. Otherwise, it would be in *Kavishiromani* Lekhnath Paudyal's words, 'If the gem be thrown in the country full of foolish people, *Bhilla* (the value of the precious stone) will be that of just a cowrie.' On that account, we accept that the work represents an important contribution in demonstrating the value and expertise of the Great Poet Devkota at the public level.

• **Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav**

When I look back, it is my work entitled ‘The Great Poet of Nepal’ which gives me immense satisfaction. To complete this biography, I had worked to the best of my capacity irrespective of innumerable challenges that came my way. I personally experienced my deep involvement and feelings for Devkota while doing this research. I internalized within myself the facts and surroundings of Devkota’s life. This work made me sentimental since it made me more familiar and near to Devkota’s real life experiences as the Great Poet didn’t get to live more than half a century. There is one thing that continues to strike my mind. I would have considered myself blessed, had I been born in the same period as Devkota. I would have definitely written a biography on Devkota with his help and the outcome would have been more authentic. Such a creation, then, would have represented a lively and more accurate biography in the field of Nepali language and literature.

• **Narendra Raj Prasai**

Publisher's Note

An association was established in 2059 (Bikram Sambat era) in honor of three literary heroes of Nepal – *Kabisiromani* Lekhnath Poudyal, *Natyasamrat* Balkrishna Sam and *Mahakabi* Laxmiprashad Devkota (*Kabisiromani*, *Natyasamrat* and *Mahakabi* being the honorary titles of the three respective heroes). The association, known as Trimurti Niketan, has erected life-size bronze statues of the three heroes on 11 Bhadra 2061 BS.

The three statues are faithfully displayed on the roof of the Nepalese style building of Trimurti Niketan situated in Sanchargram, Kathmandu. Inside the same building, a library 'Trimurti Pustakalya', furnished with collection of books and documents relating to the three heroes, has been established. The library is running smoothly.

Trimurti Niketan was founded and constructed as a result of farsighted vision, proactive initiatives and dedication of Ghatraj Bhattarai, Narendraraj Prasai and Indira Prasai as convened by Nai Prakashan (www.nai.com.np).

General Bhopalmansingh Karki, Khanuprude 'Rambabu', Sitaram Prasai, Ramchandra Timothy, Salomi Lepcha, Kamal Thapa, Dr Modnath Prasrit, Narhari Acharya, Harihar 'Birahi', Taranath Dahal, KK Karmacharya, Temba Sherpa and Balkrishna Tuladhar had contributed a lot in the construction of the building of Trimurti Niketan.

The Great Poet of Nepal has been prepared and published in line with the objectives and programs of Trimurti Niketan. Translated by Anukritika, the original of this book is authored by Narendra Raj Prasai.

Narendra Raj Prasai is an established Nepali writer. He is best known for his works in genres like lyrical poems, critics and prose. He is a leading author in the field of biography. In a career spanning 45 years, Prasai's 74 books have been published till date. He is also the founder of two leading Nepali literary organizations-- Trimurti Niketan and Nai Prakashan. Prasai was also the planner, creator and organizer of 'Devkota's Centenary Festival', 'International Literary Conference', 'Global Women's Nepali Literary Conference', 'Bhanubhakta's second Centenary Organizing Committee (sponsored by Nepal Government)' and 'Satyamohan Joshi Centenary Festival'.

Anukritika takes a keen interest in literary translations. She has translated Chandra Bahadur Shrestha's 'My Reminiscence of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota' in English into Nepali language with the title 'Mero Sathi Devkota'. There are four books to her credit. 'The Great Poet of Nepal' is her second book in the field of translation.

Trimurti Niketan is delighted to publish **The Great Poet of Nepal**. Publication of this book would not have been possible without the invaluable cooperation of Namita Singh, Durga Banwasi and Keshav Sigdel.

Trimurti Niketan thanks Anu Raj Joshi for the work of editing.

• **Indira Prasai**
Chair-person

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Author's Note

When I read Laxmi Prasad Devkota's 'Muna Madan' for the first time, I was 12 years old. Meanwhile, my eyes were filled with tears. As I grew up, I read *Pagal* (The Lunatic) and *Yatri* (The Traveller) by the same poet. In the days after that as I went through other additional creations of Devkota, I was able to know him very closely and understand him. As my knowledge increased, I started having immense respect for the poet.

The person who gets an opportunity to write or speak about Devkota or even to establish institutions in his name is considered lucky. I feel blessed as I got to exploit this forte. Devkota's stature is that of the Mount Everest of the modern era of Nepali language and literature. The life story of this Great Poet is lively and immortal.

It was in the 1980s that I read Devkota's 'Sulochana'. I landed in a daze, reading that epic. I experienced the same emotions that I had felt while reading 'Muna Madan' in my early childhood. The epic impacted me so much so that I became sad for many days. I felt as if I am a part of the entire life of Sulochana and I myself had turned into Sulochana at that moment. On the other hand, I wrote one lyrical poem. For me, it was the manifestation of Sulochana's life story. This particular lyrical poem titled 'For Sulochana' was published for the first time in the monthly literary magazine

'Madhupark'. At the second time, it was published with the same title in my book *Mero Manko Deurali* (1989) which is a collection of songs. Also, the same lyrical poem was recorded as a song in 'Radio Nepal'. Aruna Lama was the singer and Kundan Raj Subba was the music composer of this song. The 'Radio Nepal' had aired this song frequently and also circulated in the market as cassettes and CDs:

*I laughed yet I burned within
I am burning with happiness
Igniting fire all over my heart,
I am showing coarse happiness
I felt my hot breath
when I landed in the whirlwind alone,
Tears fell from my eyes
when the drought dried my lips
I went on burning with the glowing heat
those who wanted to weep
wept with those smoke,
I wanted accompaniment
when I was alive but I couldn't get
a place with the living.
People fake emotions on the dead body, their eyes filled with tears
People show sympathy at the eleventh hour
And wept only when I died,
I was frightened alone
when I was living
I had lived my life weeping
when I was alive.*

Ghat Raj Bhattarai, Indira Prasai and I established 'Laxmi Prasad Devkota Academy' in 1996. Ghat Raj Bhattarai and I had a discussion and came to a conclusion. According to the agreement, Bhattarai was to collect and edit memoirs on the habit and behavior of Devkota. I decided to write biography on the 'Great Poet Devkota'. With the active effort, Bhattarai was able to publish collection of memoirs on Devkota titled *Mahakavi Devkota Ko Aanibaani*

in 1998. But, it took me more than a decade to publish my work *Devkota Ko Jiwanshaili* (2009).

When I started to write the biography of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota, I could not dedicate my whole time on it. It intrigues me to see people who do not know what to do with their life and sit idle throughout. I have always led an active life. This also means I enjoy my work. Sometimes I tend to start a new endeavor without completing my previous work. This could be the reason as to why I would fail at times, or luckily I'd pass too or be very late in completing the task. Interestingly, even if I fail I never get disheartened. Instead, I take my failures as life lessons and focus on my work enthusiastically.

I had a great interest and dedication in the field of literature and social services since my childhood. My nature was such that if given an option I'd rather choose to serve the society than to focus on school syllabus. Gradually, I was more inclined to literature.

I started my journey as a litterateur from Hangpang of Taplejung to Jhapa's Sanischare. In Jhapa, I became involved in writing under the guidance and support of my teacher Shiva Prasad Dahal. After my arrival in Kathmandu, I got the opportunity to meet Balkrishna Sama, Ishwar Raj Aryal, Basantakumar Sharma Nepal, Sundar Prasad Shah 'Dukhi', Liladhoj Thapa, Ghat Raj Bhattarai and Fanindra Raj Kafle. They were distinguished personalities who inspired me in the field of literature. I shared a great rapport with Ghat Raj Bhattarai and Ishwar Ballav. To think back, I feel I must have had known Bhattarai in my previous birth as well. No one could create misunderstanding between us nor did we have any creative differences till he was alive. The establishment of 'Trimurti Niketan' is the culmination of our mutual effort.

It was with the combined effort of Ghat Raj Bhattarai and Indira Prasai that we were able to construct *Trimurti* at Sanchargram in Kathmandu. The statues of *Trimurti* were erected within a decade of the establishment of Devkota Academy. The completion of this project was very tedious and challenging to us. We are very grateful to Mod Nath Prashrit and Nar Hari Acharya for their dedication and support. Under the chairmanship of Mod Nath Prashrit, the ‘Great Poet Devkota Centenary Festival’ was held in Kathmandu in 2009. It gave me immense satisfaction when Prashrit consented to be the chairman of the three day event. Prashrit and Acharya have different political ideologies. Irrespective of their belief and ideologies, they represent a symbol of harmony in the society. They are eminent personalities of Nepal. I had the opportunity of learning the art of respecting each other from my association with two former ministers-- Prashrit and Acharya.

Saints like Yogi Naraharinath and Bhikchhu Amritananda have played a significant role in my life. Their companionship taught me how to be patient when faced with challenges or difficulties. These learnt qualities of patience and perseverance rescued me when hurdles came my way during the making of ‘Trimurti Niketan’. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that it was one of the most difficult phases of my life. Some people had conspired against the construction of ‘Trimurti Niketan’. Harihar Birahi and Tara Nath Dahal are the witnesses to the problems that we faced during that time. Despite that, we had received donations from eminent personalities like General Bhupalman Singh Karki, Sitaram Prasai, Ram Chandra Timothy and Salomi Lepcha. Regardless of obstructions, we were successful in erecting a complete statue of the Great Poet Devkota in Nepal. It gives me great pride to state that the statues of *Natyasamrat* Balkrishna Sama

and *Kavishiromani* Lekhnath Paudyal have also been erected on the right hand side of the statue of Devkota. I consider myself lucky as I got the golden opportunity to write *Devkota Ko Jiwanshaili*, 'The Great Poet of Nepal', a biography on the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota who is one of the three prides of Nepal; the other two being Sama and Paudyal.

My wife Indira encouraged and motivated me to write this biography. In fact, Indira had suggested me to write biographies on each one of these litterateurs, Paudyal, Sama and Devkota, individually. However I chose to write on Devkota who is younger than these two writers, Paudyal and Sama. Then after, I started my research on Devkota. Interestingly, *Devkota ko Jiwanshaili* (The Great Poet of Nepal) turned out to be one of the most important creations among all the biographies I have written. I am grateful to my wife for playing a vital role from the very beginning till the completion of this book.

I have realized that Devkota's biography will forever remain special no matter how many biographies I may write further. This is because the life stories of other personalities are not as multi-dimensional and absorbing as that of Devkota's. The pain and the problems that Devkota had experienced make his life inspirational, lively and immortal. I think the amalgam of all these experiences of any person can serve as ingredients in making the biography enthralling. Therefore, I strongly feel that my future creations may not be as spellbinding as *Devkota ko Jiwanshaili* (the title of the original book of The Great Poet of Nepal).

I have read most of the works written on the Great Poet Devkota. The works which have been published from the findings of the related research after the completion of Ph.D. on Devkota have their own traditional importance.

Those works occupy a special place in the related fields. The fact that most of the Ph.D. studies have been done on the Great Poet Devkota proves his significance in the Nepali language and literature. Devkota's literary contributions deserve a special mention in the Nepali literary world. From these findings, I can say that the creative genius of Devkota has been greatly appreciated.

Ph.D. holders Kumar Bahadur Joshi and Mahadev Awasthi have made in-depth studies on Devkota. The works of Joshi and Awasthi on Devkota are extensive and useful. The first person to write a biography on Devkota was Nitya Raj Pandey. Pandey wrote 'The Great Poet Devkota' immediately after Devkota's demise and did a praiseworthy work. By writing the biography of Devkota, he has done a commendable job as he saved many facts about Devkota from getting lost. Likewise, Chooda Mani Bandhu wrote another important book titled *Devkota*. I have immense respect towards Bandhu.

•

It is to be noted that the completion of this work would not have been successful without the love, affection and dedicated support from Kanchan Pudasaini, Hari Shrestha and Shanta Shrestha. Additionally, I have received help from Devkota's children, nephew and nieces also. Few names need a special mention while presenting the biography on 'The Great Poet of Nepal'. Namita Singh's affiliation is mixed with affection. Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav helped me throughout. Researcher Shiv Regmi helped this biography to be more presentable. My friend Prof. Keshav Subedi has also contributed. Sincere gratitude to my dear brother Raj Kumar Regmi for taking the initiative of publishing *Devkota ko Jiwanshaili* (The Great Poet of Nepal) in Annapurna Post,

national daily, every week. These writings got published for more than a year. Jivendra Simkhada was the editor of the newspaper. He has appreciated my writing on Devkota and understood its importance. Hem Subedi, a radio jockey, presented 'The Great Poet of Nepal' melodiously before the public. All the details of this book used to be broadcasted for nearly nine months in Subedi's voice.

I worked on this biography for nearly a decade. From the past decade, the atmosphere of my home had become as if it was Great Poet's house. In between this, I often used to read out the new title of any writing about Devkota to my mother Bhagiratha Prasai. My son and daughter-in-law Dr. Kanchanjunga and Priya Prasai provided help in their own ways to publish 'The Great Poet of Nepal'. In the days after that, my mother had developed the habit of listening to 'Kantipur FM' to hear Devkota's chronicles. Even though my mother was illiterate, she was interested to see my articles published in the Annapurna Post Daily. She always encouraged me to write. It is a matter of coincidence that both my mother and Devkota were born during the same time period. Knowing this, my mother used to be more interested in the life history of Devkota. By mother's grace, I was able to write and publish the original of 'The Great Poet of Nepal'.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my daughter Anukritika for translating my book *Devkota ko Jiwanshaili* into English language.

• *Narendra Raj Prasai*

Translator's Note

(Devkota : A Geographical Mistake)

My mother always wanted me to become a writer. I write when I feel like. There are days when I'm passionate about writing. Words come naturally without much effort. When I don't feel like writing, I don't. I write for the joy of it.

My works have been publishing since I was in fourth standard in numerous national English dailies such as The Kathmandu Post, The Rising Nepal and The Himalayan Times. I wrote *Mero Jamboree Yatra*, a travelogue, when I was in eighth standard, which was published by Nai Prakashan. I have been reciting Sanskrit Mantra since my childhood. I compiled those Mantra that I recited and believed in, and *Kawach Mantra* was published by Nai Prakashan. It is a compilation of Sanskrit chantings.

My home atmosphere is a literary one. My parents are often found involved in creations. So, it is not surprising that even I entered into this field. It was a decade back when my father wrote *Devkota ko Jiwanshaili*. Writing biography of great personalities requires a lot of research on the writer's part. My father would collect information about Devkota from various sources like Devkota's family members, relatives, friends as well as the articles and books on the Great Poet. In this process, my father had asked me to read all the books in English on Devkota including

Chandra Bahadur Shrestha's 'My Reminiscence of The Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota' and summarize it in Nepali. I found the book interesting and felt that it should be translated into Nepali. *Mero Sathi Devkota*, my first book on translation is the outcome of that which was published by Nai Prakashan.

Impressed by my translation work *Mero Sathi Devkota*, my father asked me to translate yet another book. He said, "Now, you should translate *Devkota Ko Jiwanshaili* into English. Only you can render the style and timber of my writing into the English Language. Through this translation, readers around the world can have an in-depth knowledge about Devkota." I happily obliged. I wanted to complete this work at a stretch, but I could devote very little time as I couldn't neglect my studies. So, it took me a really long time to translate. I am not a professional translator. I have tried my level best in translating this book and to come as close to the Nepali original as possible.

After I read *Devkota Ko Jiwanshaili*, I felt that Devkota is a literary genius. American Psychiatrist Dr. Berkley Hill had said about Devkota respectfully, "A man like Devkota shouldn't have been born in Nepal. Because he is born in a country like Nepal, he is counted amongst the mad. It is a 'geographical mistake' for him to be born in Nepal." I couldn't have agreed more. Laxmi Prasad Devkota is regarded as the greatest poet in the history of Nepal and Nepali language. A talent like Devkota is a rare find. It is the nation's responsibility to cherish such treasures. Till now, as a nation, we have failed time and again to give necessary platform to showcase such talents. Even I felt that *Devkota Ko Jiwanshaili* needs to be translated into English and reach non-Nepali readers.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Anu Raj Joshi for editing the book. I would also like to thank my sister Namita Singh for her guidance. Special thanks must go to Miss Durga Banawasi Shiwakoti for her willingness to help me whenever needed.

Forever shall I remain indebted to my father Narendra Raj Prasai for giving me this golden opportunity and believing in my potential as a translator. I am equally thankful to my mother Indira Prasai for being my constant source of inspiration and motivation.

I would like to thank my friend Dr. Abhinav Anand Jha for his unconditional love and encouragement.

• *Anukritika*

The Great Poet of Nepal

Devkota's Ancestors

The history of descendants of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota is similar to that of Aryan's, because his ancestors had entered Nepal through India as the Aryans. The ancestors of the Great Poet had migrated from Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh primarily to Kumaon, Garhwal in northern part of India. Afterwards they had come to Achham in western Nepal. They had managed to establish their dominance therein and the place was called Devkotagadhi after them.

According to Yogi Naraharinath, some brahmins living in Achham of the Seti Zone used the name of Deukot castle of that district to designate their family name as Deukota. These Deukota brahmins had come to Gorkha through Jumla.

The ancestors, born eleven generations ahead of Tilamadhav Devkota, had shifted to Bajhang from Achham. Their impression in Bajhang was highly dignified. After their stay in Bajhang for some years, they had migrated to Jumla. The popularity of the clan there placed Dannath Upadhyaya (Devkota), who was born as the tenth generation earlier to Tilamadhav Devkota, onto the chair of the then cabinet minister. Born in *Bharadwaj* clan, their pedigree is *Upadhyaya brahmin*. Most of the clan of Dannath seemed creative. The grandson of Bidyadhar, Pandit Tripuranath Devkota, had written the genealogies in Sanskrit couplets.

The following couplet written in the glory of Dannath Upadhyaya could be seen as an example:

*Glorious is minister of the monarch of Jumla
famous as Daan Upadhyaya!*

Among the children of the Minister Dannath Upadhyaya, his son Sudaan Upadhyaya had descended to Nuwakot from Jumla, but his son Sudarshan had shifted to Gorkha. The four primogenitors after Sudarshan had chosen Gorkha as a place for their livelihood. Their social and cultural status in Gorkha was luring. They were affiliated to the King as his priest.

After the unification of Nepal by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Great Poet's great grandfathers, Pandit brothers duo, Laxmidhar Devkota and Bidyadhar Devkota followed the trail to Kathmandu along with the King as they were the Royal Pandits. Prithvi Narayan Shah had given them a piece of land in Bhotahiti authorized through king's red seal. Their work as pandit continued even in Royal palace in Kathmandu. Because of the backing support, trust and help of the palace, their financial condition was prosperous. They settled in Bhotahiti.

Pandit Bidyadhar Devkota lived in Bhotahiti with his two wives. Once, his younger wife had gone out of the house to meet her brother. The incident of the wife going out and having met her brother made Bidyadhar angry and had spoken harshly with his wife. In a wrath, his wife jumped into the pond Ranipokhari and killed herself. For his own salvation and to secure a seat for his wife's soul to rest in peace in the heaven, he had built 'Mahadev' temple in his compound. This was told to Ram Babu Devkota by his grandfather, Tripuranath, the grandson of Pandit Bidyadhar. According to Ram Babu, a provision of 22 *muri* (1 *muri* equal to 160

manas; 2 *manas* equal to approximately 1 kilogram) of paddy as budget for the temple's daily expenses was arranged. The temple is renowned as 'Bidyadhareshwar Mahadev'. Pandit Bidyadhar Devkota had built 'Ramhiti' and 'Shiva Mandir' at Boudha, Mahankal in Kathmandu. For the protection and maintenance of temples he had separated 30 *ropanis* (1 *ropani* = 5476 square feet) of land in total.

Jagan Mani was the son of Pandit Bidyadhar Devkota from his first wife, and his son was Sadhshastri Chandra Dutta Devkota. Chandra Dutta Devkota was a pandit, scholar of Sanskrit, and was sharp, intellectual and conscious. His talents had placed him in the Royal School as a teacher. Tilamadhav Devkota was born as the son of the very scholar Pandit Chandra Dutta Devkota, in 1852, at Bhotahiti, Kathmandu.

Pandit Biddhyadhar Devkota and his family were settled in Bhotahiti for years. They were known as *Saatchoke Devkota* for many years. Tilamadhav Devkota had shifted to a rented house at Dhunge Dhara in Dillibazar in 1988. Then after, they had shifted in their own house near Panchakumari temple at Dhobidhara in Dillibazar.

Tilamadhav Devkota's father Chandra Dutta Devkota too was a poet. He had gained popularity in that era as a pandit. He was considered one of the leading figures in the society. Following his tradition, Tilamadhav Devkota entered into the field of Nepali and Sanskrit literature. His literary creations had established him as a renowned literary figure. Apart from his literary creations, his mannerly behaviors and discourse had added feather to his cap which made him very popular. The Great Poet himself had acknowledged this fact, and has written, "Due to his ability to recite religious epic of *puran* in fascinating and melodious voice, I had always liked to hear him recite the stanzas of the *Bhagavad*."

Tilamadhav Devkota was famous as *puran* reciter as well as a prodigious writer. His well known devotional creations were-- *paanchayan stotra*, *chandrama stuti* and *guru stuti*, songs dedicated to Lord *Shiva tandava nritya* etc. These creations had made him renowned as a perfect literary creator. His *Laxmistotra* had been published in the *patro* (almanac) before 1933. He specially wrote poems in Nepali language, but he used to write beautifully in Sanskrit as well. He would recite poems and the *puran* lyrically. He was fond of music and used to sing songs too. He was elegant, conceit and a bit mischievous as well. He used to participate for the purpose of enjoyment, fun and entertainment with enthusiasm.

It didn't take long for Tilamadhav Devkota to establish himself in the society of Kathmandu due to his personal traits. He was widely accepted as somebody learned, intellectual and logical. He had a tempting life style. The Great Poet has written about his father, "... his personality was full of flair, spotless behaviors. He was charming, outspoken, sinless, generous, frank and witty. He had a bright, fair and beautiful look. He was loquacious and sharp minded, and was a winner. He had a great interest in poetry; and the spark of the sage Vyash would surge from his inner soul, in the form of melodious wit, time and again during his leisure time."

The work as pandit, that had been carried out by the ancestors of Tilamadhav Devkota in Gorkha, got its continuation in Kathmandu as well. He was equally occupied in recitation of *puran* and working as pandit. They had won people's heart and impressed the residents in Bhotahiti and later even at Dhobidhara, Dillibazar. The honorarium, gifts and offering given by the people to him in lieu of his duties as pandit were his source of income to run the daily chores. He used to work in the palace of General Dambar Shumsher.

He was appointed as a tutor to Samar Shumsher and used to get 30 rupees as his salary. He had won the favors of the *Ranas*, with his duties. An eminent Indian Scholar, Rahul Sankrityayan, too had written that Tilamadhav had a good access to the palace of five Prime Ministers of Nepal.

Tilamadhav Devkota married Tika Devi in 1862 and gave birth to two daughters. The daughters Nanda Priya Paudyal and Prabha Devi Dhungana lived a happy married life. Tika Devi had died after she turned twenty-three.

Tilamadhav Devkota tied the nuptial knot again in 1887 with Amar Rajya Laxmi Nepal, the daughter of Pandit Umanath Nepal and Krishna Maya Nepal. They were from Mandan of Kavrepalanchowk. Amar Rajya Laxmi was the only daughter among the five children of the Nepal couple. Nepal family had been living at Naradevi in Kathmandu. Pandit Umanath was a government employee *Kharidaar* in *Taksar* at Dharahara. They were known as *Mandane Nepal* in Kathmandu.

Amar Rajya Laxmi was 25 years younger than her husband Tilamadhav Devkota. Mature girls were not easily available in those days. The custom of child marriage was normal then. Therefore, Tilamadhav Devkota had married an eleven year old girl when he was thirty-six years of age. Despite the difference in their age, this couple continuously gave birth to children. After the birth of the first and second sons, Devkota couple gave birth to five more girls. But they were not content as they wished to have a son once again, so they had prayed to the Goddess *Bajrayogini* of Sankhu. Their prayers had been heard and they gave birth to Laxmi Prasad Devkota. The age difference in their children was remarkable. The third son Laxmi Prasad was 17 years younger to their first son Lekhnath.

The six sons of Tilamadhav Devkota and Amar Rajya Laxmi were successful in different spheres of life, except for their second son. The first son Lekhnath had become section head *Mir Subba* as a government employee. The second son Durganath was dull minded. The third son Laxmi Prasad had become the Great Poet of Nepali literature. The fourth son Madhusudan was a newsreader in 'Radio Nepal' for English language. The fifth son Mitranath was Professor in Tribhuvan University. And the sixth son Gopinath had become General Manager in Janakpur Cigarette Factory. Their daughters were Om Kumari Gotame, Lok Priya Devi Joshi, Nain Kumari Chalise, Devendra Kumari Paudyal and Prem Kumari Gautam. Lok Priya Devi was called Huta Laxmi before her marriage and she earned popularity as a poetess.

Tilamadhav Devkota had a strong acquaintance with the *Ranas* in palace. He was counted as a dedicated pandit of the *Ranas*, and was trusted by them. He was welcomed anytime in the palace of Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher and Chandra Shumsher. Once, Devkota in financial crisis plotted an idea to get some money from the *Rana's* palace. As usual he had gone to Chandra Shumsher and said, "Your Majesty! Let me have a chance to go to *teendham*. He then had received five hundred rupees as the expenses to visit *teendham*. Then Tilamadhav Devkota had locked himself inside his house for around a month. After the month had passed by, he had gone to the *Rana's* palace. Chandra Shumsher had asked him, "So, you had been to the *teendham*?" The witty Tilamadhav Devkota had answered the *Ranas*, "Your Majesty! The first *dham* is your Majesty, second is Her Majesty The Queen and the third is *hajuriya gernel* (son of Chandra Shumsher). I had just visited all *teendham* today, Your Majesty!" Chandra Shumsher was

overjoyed with this flattering answer as told by the grandson of Tilamadhav Devkota, Komalnath Paudyal. In the process of receiving from the *Ranas*, Tilamadhav Devkota had even received the charity called *Rana's dampatti daan*, meaning the charity given to the married couple. Chandra Shumsher was feeble and ill. On top of that, he was a tuberculosis patient. His medicines had been shipped from England. After having received the medicine, the search of a similar patient began, because the medicine first would be tested on that person, before the *Ranas* would have taken it. When it was realized that the tuberculosis was not to be cured by the medicines only, *Rana* Prime Minister decided to perform a charity called *kaalpurush* as advised by his *tantrik* (faith healer) and pandits. This charity was a practice of giving away the sesame and gold equal to the weight of the donor. After fixing the scales, the search of a pandit to weigh on it began. The news reached Tilamadhav Devkota as well.

Tilamadhav Devkota agreed to be the candidate to weigh on the scale and accept the charity. He stood on the scale, as *kaalpurush*, in a huge ceremony organized to mark the event. The *Ranas* were present around the canopy. They were prepared to perform this religious obligation and looked excited whereas the general public looked gloomy. After the weighing ceremony was over, Tilamadhav brought the charity in his home with the help of some porters. As soon as he reached his house, he separated the gold from the heap of sesame. To his dismay, he found that there was gold merely of name. This fact had pierced his heart. He had risked his life for the sake of his family. In fact, it was believed that the person who receives the *kaalpurush* charity would receive the donor's illness whereas the donor would get healed from the ailments if any. Luckily, Tilamadhav did not get affected by tuberculosis.

The mother of the Great Poet Devkota had died on July 8, 1934 at the age of 58. Devkota's father died the following year on June 7, 1935. He was 84. Laxmi Prasad Devkota had mourned the death of his mother and father for two consecutive years. He put himself in white attire for two years as the sign of mourning. The turban that he wore during winter was also white in color. His medium of transportation, a bicycle, was yellow in color. He had bought the yellow bicycle that could be used by the people during the period of mourning. It was bought after a month of his mother's death as suggested by the brahmins.

Devkota's Childhood

There is some controversy regarding the date of birth of Laxmi Prasad Devkota. He himself used to write the year of his birth as 1907. Actually, he was born on new moon day of *Laxmi Puja* on November 12, 1908. He was born at 21:54 hrs in the house (Block No. 21/541) at Dhobidhara in Dillibazar. According to astrological sign, he represented 'Libra' and 'Bisakha'. He was christened Tirthamadhav Devkota with regard to horoscope.

The festival of lights was being celebrated at the time of birth of Laxmi Prasad Devkota. Even the dark night of the last day of the dark half of the month was transformed into a bright one. Because he was born on the day of *Laxmi Puja*, his name was changed from 'Tirthamadhav Devkota' to 'Laxmi Prasad Devkota'.

Devkota was born in the brightness of *Deepawali*, the festival of lights; on the other hand, the day happened to be the last day of the dark half of the month. So, the astrologers forecasted that his life would be an amalgam of extreme dark and bright incidents. The way his birth had brought peace in 'Devkota Kunja', the pain and difficulties too had started adding up. As it is often said, whatever ordained to us is stronger than what is seen; and the unseen fate is stronger than the deeds. The problems started to flood in his house after his birth. In truth, slowly, his feeble health crept into deteriorating state.

Devkota at the age of four had suffered from blood dysentery which was severe. No medicine or herbs could cure him. His condition was aggravating. His sister Lok Priya Devi had brought to their house a faith healer, whose treatment had ultimately cured him.

After Devkota had been cured, there was exultation in the family of Tilamadhav Devkota. The father Tilamadhav Devkota taught him the alphabet. As a child, Devkota had learnt the Nepali alphabet by heart at his early age of five. Tilamadhav Devkota had also taught the alphabet to Balkrishna Sama, the 'would be' dramatist of Nepali literature, 12 years earlier than he had done to Laxmi Prasad Devkota.

The worldly delusion started to attract Devkota at the age of eight. He had started to figure out the impression of aim of his life from that early age. His elder brother Lekhnath was earning about three hundred rupees every month from tuition. In memory of this context, Devkota himself had written, "I used to consider him (Lekhnath Devkota) the ideal of the world. *Mataji* (mother) also used to convince me showing the brother, "My boy, you have to study like your brother." The glory, prestige, influence and seriousness of his brother's teaching profession had made Laxmi Prasad more respectful and obedient to his elder brother. Laxmi Prasad had secretly vowed to become a teacher in the future after completing his studies.

The sacred thread wearing ceremony of Devkota took place in March, 1918. His father Tilamadhav Devkota himself had whispered the *Gayatri mantra* (sacred and mystical *vedic* verse) in his ears in the ceremony. Tilamadhav Devkota had then taught him the *Amarkosh*, and other books of Sanskrit literature as well as the *vedic* verses and recitals. Devkota

used to submit instantly the tasks or lessons given by his father. The sincerity of his son gave immense pleasure to Tilamadhav Devkota. Before this son was ten years old, Tilamadhav had given him another name-- 'Saraswati Prasad', meaning blessing of Saraswati the goddess of knowledge. Tilamadhav used to say, 'My third son is the reincarnation of Goddess Saraswati herself'. Devkota considered his father Tilamadhav Devkota as a saint among Gods, devoted to the voice of conscience and duties, and a theistic pandit. He used to consider his father the greatest amongst everyone.

Devkota's education began at his home. By the inspiration of his father, he started to study the Nepali and Sanskrit language. Since his eldest brother Lekhnath Devkota was an expert in English language, it was easy for the Great Poet to follow the same track. Then, he started to take interest in Nepali, Sanskrit and English languages simultaneously from his childhood.

Tilamadhav wished his son Laxmi Prasad Devkota to become a pandit like himself. But, because of the protest from his wife and son Lekhnath, Devkota was saved from becoming only a pandit.

Devkota used to walk inside his house in his childhood. He did not like to go to the neighbourhood. He used to climb the trees in his garden. He used to play alone. Persistence was gradually developing as his character through his behavior. He would never back-bite the others; nor was he jealous. He was calm, civilized and gentle and he looked placid. The only flaw in his character appeared to be his quintessential stubbornness. But, he was a devotee of his parents and obedient to his elder brother and sister-in-law. He was talkative. He was honest and never lied to anyone.

He had written about this, “My lips would tremble if I tried to tell a lie; the truth would come out from my mouth before I could tell a lie.”

In his childhood, Laxmi Prasad Devkota was given the work of rewriting the poems of his father Tilamadhav Devkota. Devkota used to rewrite his father’s poems with the pen made out of bamboo. His father had made him use the red ink for rewriting the poems. Devkota tried to copy the poems written by his father correctly and on the other hand, he was proceeding towards making his handwriting beautiful. In the process of completing the task of copying his father’s poem, poetic inclination had rooted in Devkota.

As a child Devkota was an introvert. He used to devote himself more on copying the poems of his father than merry-making and enjoying with friends and family. Although, he was not against socializing, he did not show interest in mingling with friends. Oftentimes, he used to concentrate himself on studies.

Devkota considered English language as the greatest language in the globe. From his childhood, he was impressed by an attitude that the knowledge of English language would make him able to earn money. His eldest brother Lekhnath’s inspiration had been imprinted in his heart from his childhood. He used to consider the profession of a teacher as a prestigious one among any work or services. On odd occasions, he used to dream, “I will become the teacher of English language and earn a lot of money.” From his early years, he thought of studying hard and tamed courage to support the family from its deteriorating financial condition. He was sensibly alert from his childhood.

Devkota wrote poems from his childhood days. He involved himself in the field of literature following his own

conscience. In this context, Devkota says, “I did not learn to write poem from anyone! ... Father used to write verses in the praise of God in Sanskrit and Nepali languages. I used to rewrite them neat and clean in red ink with a bamboo pen. This was my routine work from 4 to 6 in the afternoon after my school. This activity kindled my interest in writing poems.”

Devkota's Education

Laxmi Prasad Devkota had learnt the Nepali alphabet at the age of five years. He was taught the Sanskrit language after he had learnt Nepali alphabet. Along with the Sanskrit, he was given orientations about English language as well. Devkota was taught at home by his father and his eldest brother Lekhnath for 10 years. He had received the basic knowledge of Nepali, Sanskrit and English languages in those years. His father wanted him to enroll at the Teendhara Sanskrit School. This was because of the free food, lodging and education provided by the school. Therefore, Tilamadhav Devkota had already secured permission from Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher to educate his son at that school. But Devkota's mother Amar Rajya Laxmi, eldest brother Lekhnath and eldest sister-in-law Som Kumari were against educating him in a Sanskrit School. Hence, Devkota was admitted at Durbar School with a view to provide him English education. He was admitted there in class five in March, 1921.

Devkota used to go to school in Nepalese national dress with a Nepali cap. He wore worn out leather shoes without the socks. He had grown long hair. He had disheveled hair on the first day of his school. Though he had gone to school in a very untidy state, 'his face was very bright,' writes his friend Chandra Bahadur Shrestha. In winter, he was seen in an old and over-sized coat which

was longer than his body. He also liked wrapping a muffler as well.

Devkota was not so elegant in his dressings. Nonetheless, he was excellent in his studies. He had stood class first in the school in the very year he was admitted. He was better in his performance in Nepali, Sanskrit and English subjects so early in age. His friends too were talented in those three subjects. Pinaki Prasad Acharya, Chandra Bahadur Shrestha, Mitralal Shrestha and Fanindra Prasad Lohani were his close friends. These five students in turn used to secure first to fifth positions in examinations. Nara Narayan Thapa and his friends used to bully Devkota in the class in school days.

Devkota had skipped one grade and jumped into class ten from class eight. His only job then was to busy himself in studies. He used to study continuously at home as well. He never got tired of studies; he never forgot this period of his life and used to mention it till later days, "I wanted to become a teacher in order to earn money to make my house prosperous, to help my brother and to provide enough milk and rice to everyone in my family. In order to pass the exams in time, I had farewelled playing. I did not get taste in my food. My mind always used to revolve around the geography lessons taught by teacher Baburam as if I was intoxicated. I used to dream about the letters in my English books. Books were my pillow when I slept. I used to be inside my bolted room with my younger brother during the time of four to six in the evening and often had sore eyes because of continuous reading till twilight. My study continued till midnight during the nights and would start again early next morning at five."

Devkota was given much encouragement at Durbar High School by Head Master Sharada Prasad Mukherjee.

From grade ten, he also received guidance of Rudra Raj Pandey as his teacher. He stood in fourth position in the Test Examination of class ten. Pandey's guidance and inspiration played a prominent role in Devkota's studies. On Pandey's advice, Devkota took the matriculation examination from Patna in 1926. He passed this examination in the first division. It required nine years to do matriculation then, but Devkota passed it in just five years. He also wrote on this subject, "In those five years I did not get the taste of food, I seldom looked myself into the mirror." After matriculation, Devkota became famous in his neighborhood. It was a great feat to pass matriculation in those days. Since then, Devkota was known in the neighborhood as *Sahila baje* (the third son of the pandit). As long as he lived, he was known by this nickname in Dillibazar and Maitidevi.

Devkota wrote poems after matriculation on one hand, and on the other hand, oriented himself towards English literature by going through the poems of Wordsworth and Shelly. He gradually began to study the works of Shakespeare, Byron and Matthew. And he started giving tuitions which served as his source of income.

Devkota enrolled himself at Tri-Chandra College to study Intermediate Science. He studied rigorously then after, learning lessons by heart. After going through his answer papers his teacher had told him, "You're the greatest parrot I have ever seen in my life." In fact, Devkota in his answer papers had written the lines from the nineteenth and twentieth century English poets, essayists and critics, and had even written the quotes as they were in the book.

It did not matter to Devkota whether it was evening or morning when he had started his study. He used to fall

asleep while studying and would continue the study again when he would get up. His mother, father and elder brother had to tell him that it was enough. As the financial condition of the family was not sound, his mother had managed to create environment for him to give tuitions to students at his own home. And, he had started to give tuitions as directed by his mother Amar Rajya Laxmi. Each day, he spent more than half of his time giving tuition and less than half of his time in his studies. He could not attend his college as a regular student due to the time constraint. The continuous pressure of workload made him fall ill. He was bed-ridden with fever for about 15 days. His performance in exams during this period was not satisfactory due to his illness. Nevertheless, he had passed his exams in second division.

Devkota passed Intermediate of Science in 1929. Due to financial constraint, he had to give up his interest of studying science. After that, he enrolled himself at Patna University of India to take the examinations of Bachelor of Arts. He used to give tuition to students for twelve hours every day along with the preparations for his own studies.

Devkota passed Bachelor of Arts in 1930 with Economics and Mathematics as his major subjects. He was the only one to pass Bachelor of Arts from Nepal that year. The *Gorkhapatra* daily covered the news about his achievement and he was lauded. This added to his popularity as well. Therefore, despite being financially weak, he was ranked among the first with the status of a brilliant and educated gentleman.

Devkota also studied Law at Patna University on the scholarship of the *Rana* Government in 1932. He received a monthly scholarship of 70 rupees. With the

thought that he could save some money from the given stipend, he took his younger brother and nephews to Patna to educate them. They used to take their meals in the mess in Patna. Devkota used to cook the meal on the days of cooking meat. He took the responsibility of the cook on other days too. It was Devkota who used to take more meals than his friends in the mess. He was fond of eating. He liked to appear tidy in attire *dhoti* and *kamij* that he maintained on his own.

Girl students did not study at the Patna University when Devkota studied there. Devkota had given many romantic poems full of infatuation towards girls to be published in the college periodicals. However, his poems on the theme of 'Love' were not published in the periodicals.

All India College debate competition was held at the Patna University while Devkota was studying there. He participated in the debate competition representing the Patna University. He was declared the first among the college students from all over India, and he had proved himself as an outstanding student in debate competition thereby bringing the name of University in the limelight.

Devkota met Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala while he was studying in Patna. He had visited the Kashi University during this period and had gone on industrial tour to Kanpur in India. He had travelled as far as Lucknow to see and observe the girls. He visited the Taj Mahal of Agra and had submerged himself in writing poems on the Taj Mahal.

Devkota wanted to acquire higher education since he believed that he was born to study. So, it was natural that he persistently focused on studies. He registered himself at

the Patna University once again to study Master of Arts, and immediately after that, he left for Kolkata. He had bought the necessary books from Kolkata with the financial support of Uday Lal Shrestha. Soon, he engrossed himself into rigorous study at home.

When Devkota was returning to Kathmandu from Patna after completing his Bachelor of Law, the great earthquake occurred while he had just reached Thankot. He had to struggle a lot to pass one night stay in torment at Thankot, because the sight was menacing. He was worried and frightened until he had reached his home. When he was returning home early the next morning with an agitated mind, on the way, he saw the tower of Dharahara broken down, the Tundikhel was cleaved, and Kathmandu as a whole was under turmoil. He finally reached home watching all these horrible sights. Having found everyone safe and well at home, he took the sigh of relief.

Devkota passed Bachelor of Law in 1934, and with his educational certificate, he kept on requesting for a long time the *Rana* Government to provide him a job in the government. Despite the fact that he had passed Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law, all his efforts were futile. So, he had no alternative but to start giving tuitions again for the sake of livelihood. Every day, he used to go to Babar Mahal to teach the children of Babar Shumsher. His tuition hours on those days totalled up to 18 hours a day including the tuitions at his home and outside as well.

Devkota learnt the *Tamang* language from his servant Bir Man Tamang in 1937. After that, in the winter he started to learn the *Bhote* tongue from the *Bhote* beggar who would be seen during winter around the town. The particular language and people had influenced him. He

studied Master of Arts as a private student along with giving tuition classes to the Intermediate and Bachelor level students at home.

Devkota gradually became frustrated with the study itself in course of his rigorous studies. He was convinced that his academic qualifications would not yield him a job. Devkota in this context had written, “The educational certificates remain inside the box in a room. The certificate of a gentleman is exhibited by his body.” Devkota had both, the certificates of education and personality representing qualified gentleman for job, however, these qualifications and ideals did not secure him a place in any office or court. Gradually, his hope, faith and energy were burning away. In those days, educated people did not need to do any other work beside the government jobs. In case of Devkota, even this simple reality had become a dream. This planted the seeds of frustration inside him.

Devkota started to wander about, during the process of studying and teaching. He gradually seemed to be losing affection towards the worldly affairs. His mind and heart started leaking out of his aims and goals. His state was changed into a gloomy, lonely and absent minded personality. He gave up his studies and started to show impractical behaviors. His nephew Komalnath Paudyal advocates the fact that, in spite of all these odd conditions, Devkota was engrossed in new creations.

During the period of loitering aimlessly, Devkota was drenched in poetry. Poetry alone used to strike in his heart, poetry alone used to walk in his mind, poetry alone used to move restlessly in his consciousness. He used to visualize even the globe as a poem. Whatever he did, in whatever state he would be, he would simultaneously write

poems as well. In this period, he was charged as a mentally disturbed man, mostly by his own relatives. He was in a way declared a lunatic by his family and had been taken to a mental hospital in Ranchi in India for his treatment. He was gullible and used to believe whatever he was told. Fighting against the worldly affairs and entanglements, his interest of studying Masters of Arts, ultimately was limited to a mere wish.

Devkota's Family Life

The family began to take initiative about Devkota's marriage when he was just 14 years old. A mission was launched for seeking a bridal match. Finally, Devkota tied his nuptial knot with Mana Devi, the daughter of Nutan Raj Chalise from Indrachowk, Kathmandu in 1925. Nutan Raj Chalise had migrated to Kathmandu from Jhiltung of Nuwakot.

Mana Devi was beautiful with fair complexion and medium height. The way she exchanged the discourse was sweet. 16 years old bridegroom Laxmi Prasad Devkota and 13 years old bride Mana Devi had developed immense intimacy after getting married. The family members had a great regard towards the couple. However, newly married Devkota was hesitant to present himself before the family members and neighbors in his neighborhood.

The new groom, Devkota was naive in nature. He was expert in reading and writing than his contemporaries. Hari Shrestha in this regard speaks on the Great Poet, "Though Devkota used to teach others, he himself lacked the social and practical knowledge. He was very simple. He had lost his new pair of shoes, costing six rupees, while he was in his father-in-law's house. His furious father had scolded him, "You silly! No son-in-law would let the shoes get lost in his in-law's house."

Devkota had considered Mana Devi as his beloved and dearest one from the first day of their wedding. This couple enjoyed the pleasure of conjugal life as well. After four years of their marriage, they gave birth to their first child, and continuously had four sons and five daughters.

Devkota, after entering into the family life, tried to remain close to his wife both physically and emotionally, as far as it was possible. But, most of the time, he had to concentrate on his studies. Their love, respect and understanding towards each other was mutual. Devkota used to be available for his wife round-the-clock. Even Mana Devi completely devoted her time to her husband. But, Devkota could not spare enough time to linger in his family due to his studies and education. Mana Devi, in the meanwhile, started falling sick; she used to faint repeatedly. According to her niece Mithhu Aryal, “It was assumed that something would take over her in control in those moments.” Mana Devi had hysteria and suffered from this for some years during 1936. She had started to recover after the treatments of a faith healer who had been brought from Sankhu. Then onwards, Devkota was in a lot of stress, explains *Ganesh kavi* Shyam Das Baishnav. According to Baishnav, “Devkota’s relatives say that the religious mendicant healer had kissed Mana Devi in course of her treatment of hysteria; Devkota himself had seen the scene, and he became mentally disturbed and agitated.” It spread like rumor in the family circle; Devkota’s younger brother Madhusudan in particular was found gossiping with his friends about that scene.

Devkota separated from his brothers in 1941. He shifted to his new house in Maitidevi. He named his new house *Kavi Kunja* (garden of poet). As a great number of his friends diverted their visits towards *Kavi Kunja*, his old house became a beehive without bees. However, he missed his old

house where all his brothers still lived. He visited the old house quite often, mostly when he found himself unwell.

Devkota had always trusted human beings; this at times would push him into a trap. His wife Mana Devi too was fearful of his whimsical nature; whether it would bring him some unwanted trouble. Ambika Devi Rimal, one of the daughters of Devkota, in this regard had written-- Father was too generous and mother used to get scared of his generosity; she used to satire him, "Someone may say, 'Please give me your beautiful wife' and you might possibly hand over as well." No doubt, Devkota's weakness was nothing other than his generosity.

Devkota had gone to Banaras to strengthen the Nepali Congress. Sabitri Regmi, the eldest daughter of the great poet has said, "Ganesh Man Singh escaped from the prison. Then he managed to convince my father, and trapped him to follow a run to Banaras; we finally got to hear that our father was in Banaras." Devkota used to edit 'Yugavani' the periodical of National Nepali Congress in Banaras.

Devkota was still in Banaras when his second son Krishna had died. He cried out rigorously but refused to come back to Nepal. When all the efforts to bring him back home went in vain, his eldest son Prakash left for Banaras to bring him back home. When the great poet didn't return with his son, it was then Mana Devi's turn to enter Banaras along with some pilgrims in order to look for her husband. Mana Devi had not crossed even Thankot before this.

Devkota used to live at the residence of Dev Shumsher situated at Brahma Ghat in Banaras. Mana Devi was shocked to see her husband in worn out, dirty and torn clothes in his own propensity. He had gone to Banaras with the thought of working in favor of revolution in a dignified

manner, but his social and economic status had been transformed into that of a very poor person.

Devkota had been living in a narrow passage, in the ground floor of a worn out house at Brahma Ghat in Banaras. The room neither had a window nor was it bright enough; it was actually like a dark room in the prison. His bed was turbid and filthy; the mattress and pillow did not have covers either. The room was full of piles of dirt and dust. A bundle of *bidi* (twist of tobacco rolled in a leaf) was a regular item found under his pillow. Under the mattress, there were many butts of cigarette and *bidi*. The stinking and polluted room had been the place where Devkota used to reside. Ganesh Man Singh and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai used to visit this room every hour. Many leaders from Nepali Congress had used the talent of the great poet to draft their documents. Even the communists like Puspa Lal didn't spare Devkota's talent and made him write their documents of their party and policy. Devkota, for his labor and writings, used to get the money enough only for his smoking.

With continuous work, Devkota was confined to bed in Brahma Ghat. Then he had moved to a room as a tenant in Pokharel Bandhu's house at Durga Ghat. He was caught by malaria, and had fever as high as 107 degrees Fahrenheit. Devkota couple did not have a single penny with them. Consequently, he would lie down in bed hungry, and fall asleep with empty stomach. He would become unconscious with hunger and fever; he couldn't even realize that he had discharged urine and discrete on bed itself. Hunger, illness and grief had transformed him into a living skeleton.

Devkota's wife, Mana Devi, had to beg money with passersby. Nepali students living in Banaras were worried upon seeing this pathetic scene. She cried for help with the

students. She condemned the congress people. Afterwards, she had shared her inner heart and the pain of those moments with Govinda Bhatta, Shakti Lamsal and Bhawani Ghimire; she had said, “I sought assistance with Nepalese there, and managed to take my husband to hospital; but so called leaders and conversants didn’t help at all.”

Mana Devi used to buy grains of gram, if she got money. In the time of pain, there appeared in their room as an angel who was Sundar Raj Chalise. He had helped Devkota generously with financial support. Then the undergoing pitiable condition of Devkota couple had suddenly converted into a state where they could afford to have food daily.

Devkota in Banaras, misled by others, cried out loudly against the *Rana* regime but started missing his motherland when the stomach stopped receiving anything for days. Then he wrote an application to Babar Shumsher with a humble swear that he would never participate in politics. The *Rana* Government then had brought him back to Nepal, with the assurance and condition that no action would be taken against him. *Ganesh kavi* Shyam Das Baishnav explained that the *Rana* Government had sent Madhusudan, brother of Devkota, with one hundred rupees as the travel expense to bring him back from Banaras. Devkota had returned to Nepal and stepped in his house exactly after a lapse of two years, two months and three days. He had returned around *Dashain* (a Hindu festival) and the celebration were carried with a feeling of remorse. Devkota after coming back from Banaras stayed in the old house with his brothers at Dhobidhara for about a month.

Devkota’s journey to Banaras had forced him to bid a final adieu to the job as a Professor that he had awaited for

13 years after completing his Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law. Back home, he was unemployed. He faced the consequence of leaving the job due to the inveiglement of others.

Devkota had been furious with Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Bal Chandra Sharma, when he had returned to his motherland. The behavior shown towards him by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai made Devkota file a petition against Bhattarai in the court, denying Bhattarai to be a Nepali citizen; but Bhattarai, however, had won the case. The relation between Bal Chandra Sharma and Devkota turned into an iceberg forever.

Devkota had never turned blind eyes toward his responsibilities for the family, despite the harm and hindrances faced by him. He was completely devoted to his family by all his means. He even reared a cow and a buffalo simultaneously, so that his family could get pure milk. He used to feed the cows with the cauliflower brought as the vegetables for the family. Once, he had brought a huge amount of cauliflower to feed the cow. He used to tell his wife, “If you give cauliflower to the cow, then she would give her milk to you happily.”

Devkota had appointed a cowherd named Lal Bahadur to look after his cows and buffaloes. But the cowherd Lal Bahadur used to sell the cows and buffaloes one after another and would lie to Devkota that they had been lost. All the family members used to call Lal Bahadur a scamp, so wicked; but Devkota had a sort of liking towards him. Lal Bahadur used to report Devkota everything about his children as well as Mana Devi. For this, he used to receive extra benefit from Devkota. Devkota’s affection made Lal Bahadur leave all the work and he got himself busy in passing the

information about the family. On top of that, Lal Bahadur tried to create dispute between the poet and his wife. Devkota's daughter, Ambika Rimal, regarding the behavior of Lal Bahadur said, "Lal Bahadur started talking evil about mother, by saying things like, she was mean, low minded and won't give him enough food to eat." Lal Bahadur used to fight with the other servants, and with his envious behaviors, he used to finally chase them away from the house. The servants kept changing continuously, but father never disbelieved or suspected Lal Bahadur. It was as though, if Lal Bahadur could chase away the mother too, he would become all in all in the family. Once father had told mother, "Don't do injustice to Lal Bahadur, I can't tolerate it, otherwise Lal Bahadur and I would go to stay in a hotel." There upon , without listening to my mother's explanation father had said, "Okay! Lal Bahadur, pack our bags, we are not staying here anymore."

Mana Devi decided to go to her father's house with a condition that she would never come back again, because Devkota had insulted her, believing a servant. Lal Bahadur was celebrating this incident with rejoice. He used to boast around the neighborhood that, he had chased away Mana Devi. Devkota had a crystal clear heart like that of a child, and was gullible. He nearly ruined the house trusting his servant. The family had to try and struggle very hard to separate Devkota from the servant. Finally, the day had come, when Lal Bahadur had been thrown off from *Kavi Kunj* which made Devkota displaced, but the house sighed in relief in Lal Bahadur's absence.

The lifestyle of Devkota had startled his wife Mana Devi; so she took to a new activity of devotion and went to a place of *bhagwat harikirtan* congregational singing or musical recitation of hymns at Pashupatinath. She became a

disciple of Kavi Prasad Gautam. The *kirtan* there took almost all her time she used to spare for the household chores. She had become a good arranger of the *harikirtan* and a loyal follower of Kavi Prasad Gautam. With the passing of time, Gautam *guru* had become her entire asset. So, in the days that followed afterwards, she used to give away the hard-earned money, brought home by Devkota, to her *guru*. Devkota's nephew Padmanath Paudyal said, "Despite the flow of income, the house of Devkota suffered from scarcity."

The lack of cooperation and trust between the husband and the wife transformed the *Kavi Kunj* as 'a rotten man's ruining manners'. Mana Devi was devoted to Lord *Krishna* and she was not so close to Devkota. In spite of all these and with no other alternative, Devkota as her man used to accept the guidance and request of his wife Mana Devi.

Devkota used to make every effort to manage the expenses of the daily chore of his household. He had to struggle for his children's rituals like marriage and sacred thread wearing ceremony, because he had never lived an organized life. His nature, in fact, remained like that of a child; so he used to bring mint candy and balls of molasses and sweetmeats whenever he had money. Even at midnight, he used to wake up all his children and distribute the sweets equally not forgetting to keep some for himself. If he had money, he used to stuff his pocket with balls of molasses and sweetmeats, and distribute them to the children in the neighborhood or even to those children he used to meet on the way.

Devkota spent most of his time in giving tuition classes. According to Amarnath Uprety, husband of his niece, "Devkota in those days had to look after a family of 12 members, but no matter what he earned, he never used to get

lunch and tiffin on time.” *Ganesh kavi* Shyam Das Baishnav, in this context, has said, “His family is responsible for the untimely death of the Great Poet. Devkota had never received his lunch on time.”

The food at the house of the great poet would never be prepared on time. His wife did not pay any attention to take care of the family. She was more devoted to religious affairs. When he was in a hurry for work, he used to take out the boiling yet uncooked rice from the pot. He used to eat it half-cooked or so by sipping with water. There was no one to pity him. If anyone would take side of Devkota, it was sure that *Kavi Kunja* would get into undesired consequences. So, even his relatives were unable to help him out, and had to see him suffer helplessly.

Devkota's Personality

Devkota was very generous. He didn't know the tricks of lying, cheating or deception. He believed in the concept of 'simple living and high thinking' with the firm belief on oneness of the human kind. He was the follower of the philosophy of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the philosophy that the world is one family). His personality was as clean as a smoothly flowing glacier, and his face was the complete reflection of his heart. He was greater than what people thought of him, perceived him, or experienced him. As Taranath Sharma writes, "Devkota was the symbol of divinity, humanity and was a symbol of that personality who always voiced his support for the victory of truth." Thus, people couldn't understand him, nor did he understand them. As a result, he became quite a failure in most of his actions. That might have made Balkrishna Sama, *natyasamrat* (Master of Playwright) and great scholar of Nepali literature, declare Devkota 'a failure as a human'. In spite of that, his greatness of commitment was one of the major traits of his personality. So, *Yugkavi* (Poet of the Era) Siddhicharan Shrestha said, 'Devkota was a persona with a great soul.'

Devkota had a very attractive face. He was taller than the average Nepali height, with his chest wide and hairy. His round face with an olive complexion was smooth and bright. He had big eyes, pointed nose, and curly hair. The glow on his face and his physical appearance made his

personality very attractive. He used to smile and laugh with ecstasy. According to his third daughter Meera, her father used to live a jovial life without any anxiety. Madhav Ghimire had described the personality of Devkota in brief by comparing him with a sage chanting *vedic* hymns with Lord *Indra* in his chariot. Ishwar Baral had compared Devkota's shoulders with that of a bull. In fact, the magnanimous shoulders of Devkota had carried entire modern Nepali literature.

Devkota generally used to attire himself in Nepali National dress and Nepali cap *Dhaka topi*. He later on used to carry the cap in his hand, and rarely used to wear it. He used to drop his cap while walking. He would place the cap on the table while eating in a restaurant, and would forget to collect it back. He started losing the cap quite often, so he gradually left the habit of wearing cap. He had a keen interest in stylish hair, and most often his wife Mana Devi used to comb his hair. Sometimes, he used to dress up himself in tie and suit. He would oil his hair and comb it aside, while going out of his home. According to Shiva Prasad Neupane, the Great Poet used to tie a girdle made out of coarse cloth, a type of belt used especially while wearing Nepali national dress.

Devkota was a loyal devotee of his parents. He used to bow down on the feet of his parents every day. He used to greet his sister, brother in-laws, uncle, aunts and niece and nephews as well. He was an ideal for courteous behavior. He was always good with his seniors and loved his juniors.

Devkota's bedroom used to be untidy. He used to sleep on the filthy mattress with equally filthy padded quilt. The floor of his room used to be full of pieces of papers,

butts of cigarettes and marks of ink. His clothes during his stay at home used to be filthy. Once, Ramesh Bikal had gone to meet Devkota, and had found him wearing dirty vest and *dhoti*. He would wear *langauti* (loincloth) in home and would cover his body with a blanket or a shawl, as Professor Parthiweshwar Prasad Timilsina explained. He never crossed the boundary of his compound in that attire. His neighbours and regular visitors would see him in such get-up which was common.

Devkota used to go out of his house wearing *dhoti* with *kasmiri* shawl and slippers. He usually did not like to go out without his bicycle. In winter season, he used to wear an overcoat on top of the Nepali national dress; but he used to take out the overcoat while eating in a hotel and in the parliament or even while teaching. He used to forget to pick up his overcoat like his cap. This habit of Devkota had become usual practice. He often used to leave his coat in the Assembly of the Advisory Council; one day, his coat had been picked up from there. He, in this regard, had said, “A very simple thing got stolen from the parliament; this is a shame for Nepali people. I am not worried about the coat; I am distraught about the dwindling morality of Nepali people and wonder when are we going to be human?”

Devkota used to dress up elegantly while going out. However, he used to wear and dress carelessly inside home. He seemed as a servant in the eyes of those who were not familiar with his get-up. For instance, Dr. Ram Prasad Pokharel had gone to his house in Maitidevi to meet him on November 25, 1950. He found Devkota as if he was a well built worker, bit tall and bit dark in complexion. Devkota had met Pokharel in his room. While talking, snot ran out of Devkota’s nose, and Devkota tore a page of his hand written manuscript lying under the mattress, and wiped his nose. He

used to tear written pages recklessly even to light a cigarette, Hridayachandra Singh Pradhan had written about him in 1947. In the context of Devkota's snot, Parasmani Pradhan had written, "Pandit Dharanidhar Sharma, all of a sudden ran towards the stage with a handkerchief in his hand. We were unable to guess what exactly had happened. Pandit Sharma wiped the snot dripping from the great poet's nose and said, "This is how the great poet is! He is unaware of the dripping nose. Poets are often of this sort." The visual live dialogue of Pandit Dharanidhar Sharma with Devkota had made the audience laugh." Devkota was a maestro of poem recitation. The third daughter of the great poet Meera repeatedly praised her father's oratory skills, "Everyone would get delighted and spellbound when my father recited poems."

Devkota at times used to dress himself in formal and attractive manner, though his heart and spoken words were more beautiful than his dress. This has made him a symbol of *satyam shivam sundaram* (truth, godliness and beauty). His behavior was as lucid as his honest writing. As Shakti Lamsal says, "He was not only great, but he was a *mahamanav* (great man)." In examining the personality of the Great Poet, Lamsal writes, "Devkota was popular among his contemporary for his honesty and clarity in saying. His quality of lucidity and openness at times used to create a difficult situation for most people. The example of his clarity and openness used to be very unpleasant yet truthful, beyond any comparison. His sayings used to carry evidences. Devkota was an outstanding personality in literary creation, but appeared to be a weak player in many other things. He had remained self-respecting throughout his life; he had never bowed in front of anyone. He remained almost firm and never surrendered in spite of difficulties and troubles in his life."

Devkota's meal often included meat. According to his wife, "Soup of the goat's leg was his favorite cuisine. He preferred milk to tea but he left drinking milk early in the morning after his cows got lost. Banana, papaya, and orange were his favorite among fruits. He used to buy and bring his favorite fruits, during the days he received his pay.

In fact, Devkota's personality was different from what was heard about him. Those who often visited Devkota found him quite contrary to what they used to think about him. Shankar Lamichhane in this context had written, "I jumped into his room suddenly and saw someone wrapped up in a black blanket, lying on a filthy bed, holding his chin with left hand and attentively reading in a loud voice. At first, I thought of returning immediately from there, thinking that this person might not be the poet himself. The dry and brownish gray face, hair on the head spreading in all directions, a hairy hand popping out from the blanket, dark and dry hands with patches of ink! This person can't be the Great Poet! I observed all over the room, it seemed as if a storm had just left the room; paper scattered in all directions. Not a single book might have been in proper condition. The clean patch without the ink in the mat looked ugly since there was no sufficient light. The color of the wall was peeling out, and the wall had pencil sketches of Lord Shree Krishna, Rabindranath Tagore, and an old man with beard." According to Kamala Uprety, the niece of Devkota, those sketches were made by Prakash Prasad, son of Devkota.

Observing the room of Devkota, Shankar Lamichhane had addressed, 'Hello Devkota!' 'Yes, come in please' was the prompt reply from Devkota. Lamichhane was worried as well as surprised to see this state of Devkota. Lamichhane in this context has written, "I probably would

have been happy to know that he was not Devkota. It might be because of the fact that I had not expected the Great Poet to be in such a state. Then I sat close to him.” Next moment, Devkota searched something to write with, but he did not get any. In the meantime, he found a pencil, but it was not sharpened. Lamichhane recalled the context, “Then Devkota sharpened the pencil with the help of his nails and teeth, and busied himself in writing.” This particular scene made Lamichhane somewhat astonished. Devkota generally used to write with pencil. He used to sharpen the pencil with the curved kitchen knife. In the absence of curved knife, he used to bite pencil to sharpen.

Shyam Das Baishnav as a well-wisher of Devkota repeats, “The Great Poet was whimsical.” Actually, the nature of Devkota could even lead the group of those whimsically driven. Once when he had gone to toilet, a wasp had stung him. Then he had gone to the police station, with a complaint letter to take action against the wasp. He used to see imagination as reality. His imagination would never place him in his determined goal. Whether in pace or rest and be it while eating or gambling, he used to be in his own world. He used to come home around 11 o’clock at night. At times, someone from the family had to go to find him. He preferred to enjoy outside home rather than to stay back. According to Durga Prasad Aryal, he used to get ready to walk out of his house at anytime and on any one’s proposal. He was habituated to entertain himself outside his house.

Devkota would never get tired of talking. If he would not get anyone to talk to, he used to go outside just to stroll around the city, swinging in the imagination. As Purna Prakash Nepal ‘Yatri’ says, “If he wouldn’t get any companion to chat with, he would mumble, gazing at the

horizon or the sky. Shyam Das Baishnav imitated this habit of Devkota all his life. Devkota was the king of inspiration. He used to deliver the philosophy of reality. Once Agni Prasad Rijal had told Devkota, “I have come to see your house.” Devkota had answered Rijal, “My body is my house; body itself is the house of human; there is no house outside; and body is the real house. Sir! And make this body beautiful with ideas, thoughts and works. If you want to see the artificial house, have a look at the palace, the *Singha Durbar*.” Cigarette immensely influenced the personality of Devkota. He never used to get satisfied of smoking cigarettes. He was accustomed to have a cigarette between his fingers while coming out of his house and even while riding the cycle.

Devkota kept changing his hair style and beard. He at times used to have short hair and at other times he used to keep hair long enough to make a plait. Similarly, at times he used to grow his beard, and at other times, he used to remain clean shaved. He was very fond of changing his hair styles. He used to comb his hair nicely if he had money, and would walk with uncombed hair when he would run short of pocket money.

Devkota was a veteran in writing and speaking. He had always remained an eloquent public speaker. He was a great patriot. His thinking about nation was not superficial. He often used to think of Nepal and Nepali people, and used to write and speak about them. Regarding this nature of the great poet, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala had said, “Devkota is the propounder of the renaissance of Nepal.”

Devkota had excellent delivering quality. His speech could keep the audience spellbound till the end of his speech. In Ananda Dev’s words, “The eyes of the audience

used to twinkle-bright, once the microphone was handed over to the great poet.” The great poet was a magic in the field of poetry. Paras Mani Pradhan, in a function had addressed him as an 'electric poet' due to this specialty. He indeed was an electric poet. The way the bulbs light on while pressing the switch, Devkota too used to write continuously, once he used to start with. He had acknowledged the fact that, he was considered as the 'electric poet'. He would continue writing even when he suffered from fever of 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

Devkota used to sing as well. He used to play the harmonium while singing. The music maestro veteran Yagya Raj Aryal was his music teacher. As a school student, he used to write and sing the lyrics in his own tune. Music master Ratna Das Prakash was his close friend during those days. Ratna Das Prakash often used to sing the songs written by Devkota. Devkota had learned music from Naticaji as well. Naticaji used to go to Devkota's house at Maitidevi to teach him music. Devkota, as written by Shyam Das Baishnav, had sung this song composed by Naticaji.

*I'm living only for you
Many springs opened the buds
Many dawns revealed the scenes
Collecting all these beauties,
I'm preserving them for you.*

Devkota considered himself to have been sent in the world by the God to write, speak, eat meat and smoke. He used to work hard, used to give tuition for 18 hours a day, and could write for 20 hours. He used to sleep only for 3-4 hours, and used to start snoring as soon as he slept. He used to eat a lot and be rarely satisfied. In a sitting of an hour, he had chewed around a kilo of soya beans. He could eat as many as 10 gulab jamun and 10 alu chop.

Devkota considered poetry as a part of his life. Every morning while brushing his teeth, he used to hum poems. Meanwhile, if anyone requested him to write a poem while he would still be brushing, he would hand over the brush dripping foam of toothpaste, and with the speed of a flash, would complete the poem. He would walk ahead, reciting the recently created lines, without even rinsing his mouth. His lips and moustache would shine with the foam of the toothpaste. If anyone asked, "What are those white marks on your mouth?" he would reply with ease, "Oh! I was brushing my teeth, just forgot to rinse so....!"

Devkota's dedication and attention to all the forms of duties were undivided. His children used to hang on his neck, or back while he would be taking tuition classes or writing, but even then, he could concentrate on his teaching, writing or reading.

Devkota was the well-wisher of the poor. He was the source of inspiration for the oppressed and untouchables. Basu Pasa had brought a proposal for eradicating 'untouchability' from Nepal, while Devkota was a member of the Advisory Council. As soon as the proposal was passed by the Council, Devkota had gone to a meeting of *Harijan* (the untouchables) and drank a glass of water from one of them. After he had drunk the glass of water, in the program, he said, "I have drunk the 'untouchability' with the water, from now on you are not an untouchable any more, and you are touchable like me."

Devkota indeed had an unpredictable nature. He used to exhibit his whims among his friends quite often. For instance, once he had made fun of his close friend, Chandra Bahadur Shrestha, "We take bath every day, but Newars take bath after a long time." Shrestha who was from Newar

community himself had replied to Devkota, “We don’t bathe with just a mug of water like you Brahmins do. We make ourselves completely wet in a proper way.” Upon hearing this answer, Devkota had told Shrestha, “Okay then, get ready to take bath; I will pour water on your body; let’s see how many buckets would make your bath complete!” As proposed by Devkota, Shrestha squatted near the well. Devkota pulled the buckets full of water from the well and kept pouring on Shrestha. It was a chilly winter day in the month of December. Shrestha began to tremble with cold after the seventh bucket of water over him; but, he tolerated it till Devkota continuously had poured seventeen buckets of water on him. Shrestha was in the position to cry aloud, “I have had enough!” Right then, Devkota had stopped pouring water after the eighteenth bucket. The whole incident has been mentioned in the book titled 'My Reminiscence of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota' (1981) written by Chandra Bahadur Shrestha.

Devkota used to share his heart with his close ones. He used to like the company of anyone including Ram Hari Sharma and Shyam Prasad Sharma. He was roaming around in despair, couple of months before he had died. He had met Shyam Prasad Sharma during his desperate days. He had expressed his pain with Sharma, “Shyam Prasad, I have become a wounded bull of the Asan market; people hurt me with their stings.”

Devkota was too generous. His generosity was open like the sky. His youngest daughter Muna Ghimire confirms the greatness of her father, “I have never seen a great heart like my father as compared to anybody’s father so far. My father was indeed like a God, and he had won the hearts of people.” The great mistake of Devkota’s life had been the way he blindly trusted others. He would never

know that other people were using him as a weapon. Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav in this context would say, “Many people had taken advantage of the positive attitude and behavior of Devkota.”

Devkota had a charismatic personality. He was a personality who had the motto of never telling lie, never troubling others and never doing evil; rather he used to remain in grief and get lost within himself. He was like an ocean that never minds even if someone spit on it. He was a personality filled with the qualities like that of a God; he fits into any personality that one might esteem. Devkota was extra ordinary. In other words, he was a great human. He can be compared to Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, as he was calm, clean, and attractive. He represented a symbol of self-pride like a flower. To summarize all the above, he is unquestionably a Great Poet.

Poet Devkota was conscious and far-sighted. He had proved the thought of his writings in his lifetime. Russian rocket had landed on the moon exactly fifteen and half an hour earlier than his mortal life had come to an end. In fact, Devkota had imagined the unimaginable with his sixth sense, and had written.

*What is great in the world?
Sweat and conscience!
What should one's aim be?
To fly high and touch the moon!*

Aganina Lyudmila Aleksandrovna, a Russian writer who knew Devkota personally, had mixed feelings when she heard about the first ever landing of rocket in the moon. She was happy because she could witness something that Devkota had visioned. At the same time she was sad to know about the demise of Devkota while she was in Russia.

There were people who had made fun of the great poet for having written 'Leap up and touch the moon'. But, the truth of his imagination was realized on a day of his lifetime. Gopal Pandey 'Asim' declared, whatever Devkota had written was correct. Asim had written a poem in this context:

*Rocket landed on the moon
at 2:42 in the morning.
Devkota, however, left the mortal body
at 6:10 in the evening.*

Devkota's Hobbies and Interest

Smoking would remain the best of Devkota's hobbies ever. He was the companion of cigarette and his companion too was cigarette itself. He used to collect the butts of cigarette and keep puffing. If he wouldn't find the whole stick of cigarette, he, therefore, would collect even the butts of cigarette. 'Caravan' was his favorite brand of cigarette but 'Motormar' and 'Fulmar' brand was affordable, so he used to smoke this brand quite often.

Devkota's best delight was cigarette. He had continued this addiction, from the age of twenty-five. He, at times used to smoke continuously up to seven cigarettes at once. His style of smoking was quite dangerous. He would inhale the smoke as long as his breath allowed him, and would exhale the smoke after a long time. He used to offer sweetmeats to his children and asked them to buy cigarette. So, the children also were interested to bring cigarette for him. In this connection, he used to ask Bhuwan (Koirala) Dhungana, too, to bring cigarette from the market by calling her "Bhupa, Oh Bhupa!" and offering candies. Bhupa is a friend of his third daughter, Meera. According to Bhuwan (Koirala) Dhungana, "Devkota used to be seen smoking at all the times."

As Swayambhu Lal Shrestha informed, he used to smoke a packet of cigarette in an hour, if he got it free.

Whereas, Ram Hari Joshi had seen Devkota smoke a bundle of *bidi* per hour. In the context of Devkota's love for cigarette, Madhav Ghimire had written, "During the entire journey to Tashkent, I had experienced that he was drawn in some kind of mental anxiety. Cigarette was his intimate companion. Before boarding the plane, he would put out the butt by pressing it with his foot, and no sooner had the 'smoking prohibited light' extinguished, he smoked again."

Once, while Devkota was in Banaras, he got frustrated when he didn't get anything to smoke. In search of cigarette, he reached the railway station. When he had seen a gentleman smoking cigarette inside a railway bogie, he had stepped into the bogie and asked the gentle man to let him puff the butt. The train came into motion and took the speed when Devkota was still puffing the cigarette. Devkota didn't realize the train moving, since he was totally involved in enjoying the cigarette. The gentle man stepped down at Faijabad, and Devkota too came out of the train along with him. After a brief introduction, the gentle man recognized Devkota as a renowned poet of Nepal. The gentle man invited Devkota to stay at his house as a guest that night. The next day, the gentle man bought a ticket back to Banaras for Devkota, and sent him back with due respect.

When Devkota ran out of money, he used to roam around in search of cigarette with great anxiety. He would smoke even the butt of cigarette offered to him with a delight. Devkota would keep on smoking the cigarette without caring that the fire had reached his fingers. If he would start writing, with a cigarette in his hand, he would realize it only after when it would burn his fingers. According to Mithila Devkota, the daughter-in-law of Lekhnath Devkota, he smoked *tambakhu* (mixture prepared with dry tobacco leaf powder cooked in boiled sugar cane juice). He used to drink

around five liters of water in a day. He used to drink water continuously because of dehydration from prolonged smoking.

Cancer had been detected in the Great Poet Devkota. In order to change his frame of mind, he was taken to *Adeshwar mahadev*, Lord Shiva's temple at Sitapaila, Kathmandu with the support of Mathema. Devkota was kept in Mathema's house. Both of them were ministers in the cabinet of Dr. K. I. Singh. Mathema, who had already known the behavior of Devkota, took care of him for a month.

When Devkota was in the house of Parshuram Bhakta Mathema, there were lots of hole on the carpet burned by cigarette's butt. This was observed by Mathema's daughter, Padmawati Singh, a writer. A lot of regulations were maintained for the improvement in his health. He was prohibited from buying and taking cigarettes. People from all age groups including children would reach there to meet him. Devkota had formed a group of local children by influencing them with his magic of words, and poetry. He had convinced the children and made them bring cigarette to him. The humbleness of Devkota had melted the heart of Ombar Singh Thapa, as well, who secretly used to bring cigarettes to Devkota during his stay at that place. Thapa used to buy two-three cigarettes with his pocket money, because he had heard everyone talking about Devkota that, 'He is not an ordinary person, he is the great poet of Nepal.' The greatness of Devkota had made Thapa to obey his command to bring the cigarette. Nobody knew he used to smoke while he was staying in Mathema's house, it was revealed only after when he had gone from there.

Devkota smoked the butts when he did not have any cigarette; and if he ran out of even the butts, he used to beg for cigarette in the crossings. He used to return home only

after he had puffed the cigarette. His students generally had to bring cigarettes for him. When the student did not bring cigarettes, Devkota himself used to question them, “You haven’t brought me cigarette?” He used to be obliged to the students who used to bring him cigarettes. Due to his addiction to cigarette, he lived, enjoyed and beamed with cigarette, throughout his life. Moreover, Devkota completely destroyed his body by 25 years of prolonged smoking. In fact, his death was caused due to cigarette.

As a student, Devkota used to hate those who smoked. He even used to snatch and throw the cigarette from his near and dear ones. But, later on, he himself became a cigarette addict. His students were also affected by his habit of smoking. His students became addicted to cigarette as well. His students were seized by the psychological impression that smoking would make them wise and learned as Devkota. One of the students, Ratna Shumsher Thapa, a lyricist, often used to smoke.

Devkota liked to chew betel nut as well. He used to buy a pocketful of betel nut if he had money. At the time when he was not having cigarettes, he used to be busy in chewing betel nut. However, he at times used to have betel-leaf; but he was not addicted to it. During festive occasions, he used to take *bhang* (the paste of intoxicating herbs) and used to dance.

Devkota’s favorite was sweet peppermint candy. Children used to be attracted by his habit of having sweet peppermint candy. And he used to distribute peppermint candy to them, saying, “Children, this is tasty. Take these *chaaku* (balls of molasses) too.” He used to buy peppermint candy and balls of molasses or sugar candy, as soon as he got money and used to start eating them with relish. At that

time, Bhuwan Koirala, a writer, also had sweetmeats, given by Devkota. No sooner had he received money from his tuition or salary, he used to rush to the sweetmeats shop. Rasgulla was one of his favorite sweets dish. He also used to enjoy *khalpi* (a pickle prepared from ripe cucumber).

Devkota was fond of eating meat. He specially loved the cuisines prepared from the portion of head of a goat and soup of the goat's leg. Usually, he preferred goat's chest. He often used to cook himself the non-vegetarian cuisine. His love for eating meat used to take him to the restaurant at Dillibazar height, owned by a lieutenant, even after having enough meat at home. He was a great lover of meat prepared in the restaurant of the lieutenant. He often used to reach the lieutenant's hotel twice a day, but used to take meat once. If his pocket was full of money, he used to buy the head of a goat and he would enter home, swinging the bag with the head of the goat. He was obsessed with the goat's head. Devkota's niece Sashi Rimal in this regard says, "My third maternal uncle would often ask my mother, Lok Priya Devi, Sister! I like to enjoy dining with the goat's head."

Lieutenant Krishna Bahadur Chhetri had opened the restaurant in 1949. Later on it became famous as 'lieutenant's hotel'. This restaurant had ministers to teachers as its customers. Those who wanted to meet Devkota, used to visit this restaurant, as the place had become his undeclared office in a way. The writers and the politicians too used to enjoy in the restaurant with credit to be paid by Devkota. Devkota visited the restaurant continuously for ten years. After the demise of Devkota, the restaurant got closed forever.

Devkota in his full appetite had eaten seventeen plates of mutton, five omelets, and one and a half kilogram of bitten rice in a day at the lieutenant's restaurant. He could eat two

wild pheasants alone, in one sitting. His lust for meat was one of the main reasons of his head to heel debt. Devkota's nephew Padmanath Paudyal used to cook meat for Devkota, while he was in *Kavi Kunja*. It was because his wife Mana Devi had stopped cooking meat since she had devoted herself to Lord Vishnu. She even disliked Devkota's bringing of the head, leg or meat of goat; she felt nauseating and sickening by meat. Paudyal, thus, used to cook meat and serve it with rice to his uncle Devkota. Devkota used to start having meat till all the meat would finish, and finally, would still ask for more. His nephew used to reply him, "Uncle! There is no meat anymore." Then only, Devkota would say, "Oh, you couldn't eat any meat, my nephew!" Such incidents and conversations was a regular part of their life. Devkota's obsession for meat had made him eat the hump of ox as well. After returning from Russia, he had told Sundar Prasad Shah 'Dukhi', "I had eaten the hump of ox in Moscow and my mouth still smells its odor."

Devkota, after eating the buff for the first time, had entered in a sweetmeats shop, and ordered sweets for himself and Janak Lal Sharma. He, at that moment, had told Sharma, "... eat the sweets; sweets provide alternative to cover up buff."

In the days when eating meat was prohibited in the family, Devkota used to take rice with milk and spoonful of ghee from a big spoon. Drinking milk early in the morning was part of his daily routine; but, when his cows and buffaloes got lost, he was bound to take black tea.

Devkota had tasted alcohol as well. He had taken alcohol in Keshar Shumsher J. B. Rana's residence. Rana had invited Devkota along with the Prime Minister Matrika Prasad Koirala, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, and Ishwar

Baral in a party at his residence. Devkota had gone to the dinner at Keshar Mahal on his bicycle. According to Baral, Devkota got drunk, and was not in the condition to ride bicycle. Therefore, *Rana* had offered his car to drop Devkota back home. This car was the one that was used for Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, during his first visit to Nepal. There was no car as attractive and expensive as that one in Nepal in those days.

Devkota was an expert in gambling and dice. He used to spend his leisure time by playing dice the whole day. He used to put money in dice for betting. According to Shyam Das Baishnav, once he lost money while betting in dice. Then, he had put his pen on stake and even the pen was gone. Afterwards, he returned home feeling tired and gloomy.

Devkota hardly used to lose in gambling. Therefore, he would even make money by playing dice. He wouldn't have left the game easily, once he used to completely enjoy himself in it. The following illustration would give a glimpse of his concentration on gambling. In 1947, a prayer song or song of worship was sought for the students of Shree Padma High School, Bhaktapur. Devkota's friend, teacher of the school, Bhawani Prasad Mishra had come to Kathmandu to meet Devkota for this purpose. When he couldn't find Devkota in his residence, Mishra searched around the places where Devkota possibly would be found playing dice in the streets of Kathmandu. Finally, Mishra had found Devkota playing dice in a house at Dillibazar. Mishra explained the purpose of his visit; then, Devkota began the dictation of the prayer song while continuing his gambling, and Mishra kept on copying the song as said by him. Narayan Prasad Mishra, the brother of Professor Bhawani Prasad Mishra, stated the fact that the same prayer song was finalised for the students of Shree Padma High School.

Playing cards and gambling were favorite games of Devkota, but he used to gamble during the festivals like *Dashain* and *Deepawali*. To begin with, he used to gamble with his kith and kin in his drawing room. Gradually he started spending the three days and nights of *Deepawali* festival in gambling. With the increasing interest in gambling, his search for the bigger gambling places became rigorous. In those days, there used to be a big gambling near Charkhal Adda at Dillibazar. He also started to visit that gambling spot and had always won in that particular place. His favorite number in gambling was the *chhakka* (number six) in the game of cowries. The six cowries would lay upright on the floor, and he would exclaim in excitement, “Here! I won the gamble,” and would jump with joy. He would beat his chest while jumping in excitement.

Devkota was fond of gambling. Therefore, he had even written an article on the subject of gambling, “Gambling is the most interesting game that brings people close to the ups and downs and gains and losses of real life. Gambling represents one of the best in the category of all the games people play for their entertainment. The gambling involves a close attachment to personal life which is not found in all other games. Gambling welcomes all irrespective of their caste and kind. It touches the heart, more than anything else does. Transformation of the emotional feeling is its feature.” After winning the game, Devkota used to carry the money back home. On the way, he used to give the share of the money he won to whoever asked for that as treat, and would reach home empty handed or so. He used to tell his wife in a pride and happy tone, “Dear! I have won thousand rupees today.” Once, after hearing this uproar, his overwhelmed wife Mana Devi, wiping the tears of joy from her eyes had said, “I was worried about how to manage

expenses for *Dashain* and *Deepawali*; God finally had helped me now.” Upon hearing the compassionate voice of his wife, Devkota had said, “Dear! People asked for share on my *jिताuri* (winning). It was not possible to give to some and ignore the others. The number of people asking for money increased as I started distributing the money. I don’t have even a single penny in my pocket at the moment.” These incidents were often common in *Kavi Kunj*; Devkota’s answer ultimately used to sweep away the excitement of Mana Devi.

Devkota had interest in swimming as well. He was an expert in swimming. Besides, he often used to go to watch cinema; and he used to enjoy watching drama in theaters too.

Devkota used to ride bicycle. He had learnt to ride bicycle from Ved Prasad Lohani in his childhood days. General public were not permitted to ride a bicycle in the *Rana* regime. But, since he had written words of praise about the *Ranas* and had taught the children of the *Ranas*, he was allowed to use this facility. Therefore, he used to use bicycle rather than walking on foot. He wouldn't cross his inner courtyard without the bicycle. He'd rather pull along his bicycle, than riding it if he would get companion to walk. But it was a must for him to hold the handle of bicycle. In this context, Janak Lal Sharma, a renowned writer and researcher has said, “The Great Poet always used to be with old bicycle. It was mostly used in dragging than riding; because, Devkota would meet a lot of people on the way and he had to talk to them.” He sometimes would give a ride to people junior to him but he enjoyed chatting and walking with his friends than riding bicycle. He used to have his one hand busy in riding the cycle while the other hand often would be busy in smoking. In fact, he used to ride the hired bicycle, because he often used to lose his bicycle. He would forget to

take back the bicycle he was riding and his wife had to pay the money for the lost bicycle. So, as suggested by his wife, he used to hire the most worn out bicycles.

Devkota liked to deliver speech. He used to deliver the speech in poetic style. His audience would not realize the passing of time, and he would not be on a position to realize the passing of two hours, once he started his speech. He used to deliver speech with enthusiasm and pleasant voice. He was a reputed orator.

Once, it was raining and Devkota had gone to the Nepali Language Translation Council. He was with his umbrella. No sooner had he stepped in the office, there was request from Balkrishna Sama to speak about 'Umbrella'. In fact, it was a kind of undeclared examination for him to enter into the service of the Language Council. As per the request of Sama, Devkota standing with his umbrella gave a speech on the subject of umbrella. His spontaneous flow of speech had surprised all present at that time including Sama. He gave speech for an hour. Devkota used to speak in point-wise manners in any given subject without any mistake. His voice in fact had the presence of Goddess Saraswati (the Goddess of knowledge, wisdom and learning).

Devkota had additional interest in travelling. He had visited different places of Bagmati Zone. He had reached up to Palpa as per the request of Khadga Man Singh, a politician. He preferred going out rather than staying inside the house; and he would often easily be ready to travel if provoked by any one.

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*You left a smile so dearly in the green forest
And turned at me with a squaint look so best
Walking so shaky lipped so mild as if smiled in the rest*

Devkota concentrated on writing lyrics, composing music and singing. He used to sing his songs in his own composition by playing harmonium. He used to sing in a high pitch. He liked to sing but his voice was not so pleasant. Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav says, "Devkota sang like a crow, that was infuriating." However, Devkota had frequently visited the musical school during his college days at Patna. He had learned music from the musician Bajeer Ustad and vocals from Miss Heena including saints and sages in Patna. According to critic Govinda Bhatta, "Devkota used to put harmonium under his bed and would use harmonium whenever he would be free, even I have heard him sing." Those days he used to play harmonium and sing the following song:

*God! Which wicked killed?
Breaking the temple of love.*

•

Devkota was interested in politics too. In the beginning, he wrote working papers for political parties for supporting his income. After writing for the parties, he developed interest in politics. He ultimately became Member of Parliament, and minister too. But, because he was humanitarian, he was misfit in the dirty game of politics. He used to sing political satire as Rochak Ghimire told,

*"... cracy you remain at distance
Go away cracy (Democracy)
Recite mantra while you go"*

•

Cigarette counts as the topmost interest of Devkota, and he used to forget his poverty and hunger with the cigarette. His first question to his visitor would be, "Have

you got a cigarette?” Most of the visitors of Devkota used to be poets and composers. And those who used to visit him used to hand over a packet of ‘fulmar’ or ‘motormaar’ brand cigarette first, before telling the reason of their visit. He used to express special gratitude to them who used to bring him cigarettes. He used to enjoy smoking cigarette for satisfaction in life. His close attachment to smoking made him feel that cigarettes represent the most intimate thing in his life. He even had written in this context, “I am in love with cigarette. I feel disappointed with the disappearance of ‘My Darling’ brand of cigarette from the market.”

At all times, Devkota was in lust with cigarettes. The entire cigarette that he had smoked ultimately had swallowed him as well. He wrote in this regard, “What’s about your smoking, Devkota? Did you smoke cigarette or the vice versa?” The way a moth gives up its life in the light of the lamp, he was burning his life in the fume of cigarette. The fumes of cigarette ruined him, left him of nowhere, and finally led to his death.

Devkota's Financial Condition

The Great Poet was born in the lower middle class family. His father Tilamadhav Devkota too had lived a plain and simple life. Tilamadhav Devkota was practical as well as impractical in behavior. Therefore, he couldn't think about the secure financial future for his younger generations. Too many children multiplied his problems; thus, whatsoever remaining property too was used up and consumed. The primary victim of the situation was Devkota himself. Devkota faced adverse economic condition from the early period of his life.

The family of Devkota had reputation in the society but they were not prosperous. They could hardly meet the daily expenses of their livelihood. Since his early childhood, even in the festive occasions like *Dashain* and *Tihar*, Devkota's family faced a hard time to manage and meet the expenses for decent living and food. In fact, even in his childhood, Devkota couldn't get well dressed. He had hardly seen the meals cooked and served in fine utensils. He didn't get to sleep in mattress with cover and his quilt too used to be without proper cover. His bed sheets used to be either torn or patched. His mosquito net used to have plenty of holes despite some stitches made here and there; he used to be the prey of the mosquitoes for the whole night. Actually, his impractical lifestyle had gradually pushed him towards destitute situation. He used to earn lavishly and spend like a

merchant. Yet, he was indigent and had a pitiable financial condition. Whenever he had enough money at hand, he often used to forget his actual status. He used to spend lavishly whenever he had money.

Devkota started giving tuitions as soon as he had completed his matriculations examination. As per the advice of his mother Amar Rajya Laxmi, Devkota had started to earn money by tutoring since the days of his study in the Intermediate of Science at Tri-Chandra College.

Devkota was in a great financial crisis after his marriage. Raj Narayan Pradhan, in his book 'Thirty Five Famous Men', had written about Devkota's indigent condition— "Completely absorbed in poetry, Devkota used to roam around in the world of imagination and drench in sentiment. Thus, he was not informed about the disorder of his house, or what had been going on inside his household. The children were suffering from hunger, and there was not even a grain to eat. Once, early in the morning his wife was collecting the grains of rice left in the winnow tray, made from bamboo bands." Devkota, upon seeing this, had asked, 'What actually are you doing?' His wife had answered, "Children are starved, but you are on your own inclination. I have to feed the children, collecting the grains." Pradhan further writes, "Poverty was the curse to Devkota, as he was born in poverty, lived in poverty and died in poverty. It was his poverty that had made him insane."

Devkota used to teach at Tri-Chandra College and also worked in Nepali Language Translation Council. Despite his income, he was unable to take care of his family properly because of his impracticality and carelessness towards life. Thus, he started to give private tuition which would be for as long as fourteen hours a day. He also provided tuition

continuously for eighteen hours for some years. Devkota tried by all means to earn money. Many of his students didn't pay him for the tuition. The students who were unwilling to pay him used to leave the tuition in the next month. In addition, Devkota's most of the students happened to be his relatives, so, they used to study without paying him for tuition. Devkota used to keep only 15 rupees from his earnings for himself and he used to handover rest of the money to his brother Lekhnath, because, Lekhnath was the overall care-taker of the family. Until the brothers got separated, they were all under the guardianship of Lekhnath Devkota.

Due to Devkota's mental desparity, he was always in destitute. As a matter of fact, Devkota even received 80 *bighas* of land in Koshi Tappu along with one thousand rupees cash as award from Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana around the year 1934. He distributed the land generously to many people. Finally, after distributing the land to his brothers, he had kept four *bighas* of land for himself. It was even known from his contemporary generation that Devkota had also received awards and gifts from other sources. But, despite the property he had received, he ultimately remained deprived.

The ancestral property of the Devkota family was shared among Devkota's brothers. At that time, they had only a worn out house as their property. Two-storied house with the thatched roof was divided among six brothers with a share of one room for each brother. So, Devkota accepted money from his brothers instead of the 'one room' property and bought yet another worn out house in Maitidevi. He had acquired the property, a piece of land and a house from the share of his money and the royalty of his books along with the money he had received as awards and loans. Shiva Pratap Shumsher Thapa too had helped Devkota to buy the

house with four hundred rupees that was asked on behalf of Devkota with Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher JBR. The reason for the help was that through Thapa, Juddha Shumsher had asked Devkota to write 'Juddha Shumsher Diary', which described the real incident of hunting. Later on, Juddha Shumsher ordered to publish the 'Diary' in the name of a 'foreigner'.

Devkota suffered additional financial crisis after he got separated and shifted to Maitidevi. His tuition hours gradually got increased. Even the eighteen hundred rupees he used to receive as the fee for teaching for eighteen hours was not enough to cover the financial requirements of his household. The main reason for this was that Devkota used to spend all his earnings generously. In addition, his wife Mana Devi spent the share of earnings, given to her by Devkota, in religious activities. This had brought the condition of his house in a state of collapse and crack, and his family members were compelled to wear patched clothes. It was lack of understanding between the couple that pushed the family into financial scarcity.

Devkota's state of poverty was not a matter that remained only within 'Kavi Kunj'. The information about his state of poverty had become the talk of the town, and the Kathmandu valley was stunned; the rumor gradually spread like fire all over the country as well as abroad. Ultimately, Devkota and poverty became synonymous. However, Devkota's financial condition was not as bad as the rumours on the surface about his state of poverty. The level of his earning and spending were equally competitive. The reason behind this was the fickle nature of *goddess of household*, his wife. Neither Devkota could win over her with love nor did she understand his feelings. Thus, the situation made his house unmanaged and it was in the state of disorder. But

despite this situation, Mana Devi Devkota never failed to perform her duties and responsibilities.

Devkota's heart had been accompanied by and befriended with sorrow. Once, a politician had come to visit him in his house at Maitidevi on June 12, 1955. Devkota had told him, "My condition is just like this. I'm not feeling well. That's why I am lying idle. When I got separated from my brothers, the house at Dillibazar was given to them and my share of ancestral property was only eighteen hundred rupees. I bought one *ropani* of land with that money, and had built this tiny house. Due to lack of money, the works on windows are still unfinished, you can see, the windows are still open without pane on them."

Devkota established 'Kavi Kunj' at Maitidevi. In other words, he had put his heart and soul there. He had added some land by all means, and with his hard-earned money. But his neighbors' vulture eye of greed attracted his property. Thus, in the name of the peasant movement, people had come forward to capture his land. It was due to the courage of his wife Mana Devi that the property remained in its intact form. Devkota never indulged in arguments with anyone. According to his daughter Ambika Rimal, he was ready to distribute the land according to the demand made by the people.

Devkota used to receive seventy rupees per month as pay from Nepali Language Translation Council, in addition to ninety-six rupees from Tri-Chandra College. When he could not get to puff the cigarette, he used to extend hands for cigarette or money to buy cigarette with the passersby. One out of a dozen passersby used to give him either cigarette or money. No sooner than he got the money, he smoked the cigarette and again used to repeat the act of asking money or

cigarette. This practice had been transformed into his habit. In the process, he used to face humiliation, hesitation and hatred. He used to beg without hesitation and distribute with the same generosity. One of the examples of his generosity is: once, in winter, a passerby was walking shivering with cold. And, seeing that, Devkota took off his coat and gave it to that man and then he had gone home shivering. Later, for that incident, he had a row with his wife.

Once, Devkota was returning home with his salary. He had approximately seventy rupees with him on that day. Suddenly a woman beggar appeared in front of him and asked for money, stating that her children were hungry and she had no food for them. The scene and cry of the woman melted the heart of Devkota in no time, and he gave all his money to the woman beggar. He said, "Finally there is nothing one takes along when one dies." Devkota returned home, overwhelmed with pleasure. His wife had been eagerly waiting for her husband to return home with salary. Early that morning, Devkota had promised his wife to return home on time with salary. Devkota narrated the factual description of what he had done with the money. This incident turned his wife furious and she cried cursing her destiny. One of Devkota's close friends, Chandra Bahadur Shrestha had written that the couple had a conflict over the matter that day.

Devkota used to knock the door of Keshar Shumsher Rana whenever he needed money. He used to ask money without any hesitation. Keshar Shumsher used to give him some money keeping his manuscripts as security. According to Hari Shrestha, "One of the cupboards of *Ranas* was full of Devkota's manuscript."

Devkota was in Banaras, in the year 1947, where he had been invited to deliver lecture at Banaras Hindu

University. He had accepted the invitation, but he didn't have proper dress to wear in the function. He then had borrowed a new shirt from his cousin Shiva Prasad Devkota to attend the program.

Devkota would always think about the ideas to get rid of the poverty. He had a great inclination to earn money. Once, he had told Siddhicharan Shrestha, "Now I will rear buffaloes and would become very affluent. On the one hand, my family will get to drink fresh milk, whereas on the other hand I would be able to generate income. Is there any work better than this?" After some days, Shrestha had gone to meet Devkota at Maitidevi. By that time, two milch buffaloes had been brought to Devkota's house. Shrestha was told that the buffaloes had been brought on loan, and he had drunk two glasses of fresh and warm milk. But, after some days, Shrestha heard the news about the missing of these buffaloes.

Devkota had suffered financially due to his impractical and irrational behaviors. The financial condition made him frustrated with his life as well. Devkota once in this context had told a politician, "Lot of children on the one hand, and the lack of ability of my wife to manage affairs on the other hand made my financial condition even weaker. At times, the children were served the rice mixed with husk. The financial crisis frustrated me a lot. Therefore, I even would try to forget many things, and would speak as less as possible. I have heard that people call me lunatic. I was invited to Banaras before the revolution, but there too, I was not behaved properly; so, I had come back."

Devkota's state of poverty had reached the extreme. He hardly had 3-4 hours time for sleep at night and had to work hard the whole day. He used to pass some nights by writing. No matter how hard he worked, the family always

lacked food enough to eat. His working hours used to start from dawn and continue till midnight. Nevertheless, there were difficulties still to maintain the house properly. On top of that, annual increase in the number of family members had made the situation even more difficult. The family members often used to suffer from some sort of illness one after another, which had made him put forward a proposal to his wife, “Let’s hand over the children to the society, and come back home. Then, before going to sleep, let’s take 'potassium cyanide' and leave the world forever.” His wife Mana Devi did not accept Devkota’s proposal. Devkota quite often tried to persuade his wife to agree upon his proposal, but she did not agree to his request. In fact, Devkota during that time had suffered from an imbalanced state of mind.

Devkota’s financial condition had become even worse. The difference in the thinking and behavior between the husband and wife finally had brought the house in the deteriorating state. They had difficulties in getting enough to fulfill their everyday needs. Regarding the state of financial scarcity of Devkota’s family, his nephew Padamnath Paudyal said, “My maternal uncle, the Great Poet persuaded me to stay with him for some days, but I came to know that there were no proper bed and quilt. So, I came back to my house and took the padded blanket and mattress to maternal uncle's house. I had given the padded blanket to my uncle and I slept covering myself with the home-spun coarse woolen blanket. I had stayed there for some days and while coming back to my house, I had left my blanket and mattress for my uncle.” Devkota’s financial situation never got any stability. According to writer Tejeswar Babu Gwanga, “Devkota was poor not because he lacked the skill of earning, rather he was destitute, even while he was earning.”

Devkota had some land in his name scattered in different places of Kathmandu; but, his luck deceived him here as well. Once, Mana Devi in an urgency of money had asked her youngest daughter Muna to bring the *tamra patra* (copper plates) lying on the attic. She had sold the copper plate weighing around two and half kilogram, which actually was the testimonial document with red seal for land ownership. She had destroyed all the evidence of the property by selling them in the value of copper. In fact, *tamra patra* used to be the documents of ownership of property, with all the description carved on them.

Devkota used to earn at least thousand to fifteen hundred rupees by providing tuition. According to Ramesh Bikal, renowned story writer, “Devkota was not poor in view of his income.” Along with his income from college, his monthly income used to be around two thousand rupees. In those days, just the income of two hundred rupees was sufficient for a family with 5 -7 members. But Devkota was poor despite of his income of around two thousand rupees. His generosity would not let him save any money from his income. The height of the situation is the fact that the very next day when he had drawn salary from his office, he used to request his students to give him a cigarette. Due to his impracticality, he couldn't even pay the electricity bill. Therefore, with the establishment of democracy in the year 1951 the electricity lines were disconnected from his house.

Devkota used to reach all the shops to clear his dues the day he received his salary. He used to ask those shopkeepers, “How much do I have to pay here?” “How much do I owe you?” He used to reach all the shops and show his honesty, “Today I have received my salary, so I am here to clear your dues.” This used to be the monthly saga. His dues specially would be higher in the meat shop and

lieutenant's restaurant. The butcher used to add fifty percent extra. Similarly, the lieutenant used to add around forty percent more than his actual dues and present the bill to Devkota. At the end of the day, he used to enter the lieutenant's restaurant and used to have meat and bitten rice as much as he could. He used to spend all his hard-earned money within a day. At times, he used to reach home without a single penny in his pocket. According to his nephew Komalnath Paudyal, "He quite often would take loan on the condition of paying the double amount within a month."

Devkota's poverty was the subject of interest for many. Many individuals and organizations had helped him as well. But, money would not remain in his pocket for a long time. He used to spend lavishly. To support his financial condition, Nepal Cultural Council had provided him with one hundred and fifty rupees on monthly basis for some months. But that amount would be just a drop of water in the ocean for him. He had a noble character and if his dear ones asked him to help them with money, he would manage it by all his means. Kedar Man Vyathit had suffered from tuberculosis in the year 1953. Vyathit was financially weak. He asked Devkota for money and Devkota managed 35 rupees for Vyathit immediately. He was able to save Vyathit's life. In fact, Devkota wanted to give more money to his dear poet Vyathit, but couldn't manage more than that.

Devkota was the member of the Advisory Council. He used to be in scarcity despite the money drawn from the Council. He had become the Minister too, but the perk was insufficient to overcome the scarcity of his family. His carefree style of living, and his wife's over inclination in religious activities had made his financial condition unstable. In the backdrop of this situation, people talked about his wife as an unfaithful woman towards her family. Mana Devi tried

her best to cover up the rumours. Mana Devi had openly said in this context, “I couldn’t show the tears to the Great Poet. I tried my best not to do anything that would give him tensions. I tolerated everything, and didn’t utter a word that would displease him. I had to live with pangs of hunger, by drinking water. How I managed the whole family matters is something that is known to no one other than me. There is not an end to this subject, and nothing would change even if I say this to anyone; but, I have nothing to say to him in this regard. Many times, I had given the children simple food just twice a day. Children would come back hungry from school, asking for food to eat; but I didn’t even have 2-3 penny to give them to buy and eat beans.”

Devkota’s poverty was not a drama, it was based on reality. He wouldn’t get enough to eat at home. Once, he continuously ate popped corn at Bhawani Bhikchu’s residence. Krishnachandra Singh Pradhan, who had been observing this, made a query, “Too much of corn might harm you!” Devkota had answered, “I haven’t eaten properly for four days, now you are saying that I shouldn’t eat corn!”

Devkota was always in financial crisis but he had never given up the hope. With the intention of becoming rich, he had written an application to King Tribhuvan. He had asked the King for 500 *ropanies* of land in Hattiban area. He desperately ran to places to get the land. Siddhicharan Shrestha provoked Devkota in this process. Shrestha did not appear in the front, but he was clever to make others work according to his designed plan.

Devkota tried his best to get over with the scarcity. He had been loitering in many directions by then. He once again made a plan to earn money. He thought that working as a tour guide for the foreigners, he would be able to earn

money. He followed the idea of Shankar Lamichhane, renowned author, and worked as a tour guide. He was completely engrossed in that work with Lamichhane. But ultimately he was not successful even in this work.

Once, Devkota's food was readied on the serving plate. But, instead of going to take the food, he was lying on his bed, wrapped up in a filthy blanket without the cover. And, he was telling his wife, "A corpse can't eat; he must be torched with the cremating torch." Kedar Man Vyathit had just arrived there. He had seen Devkota's acting as being dead, and he had pinched Devkota with full force. Then, Devkota unable to bear the pain, had yelled, "Ouch." Then Vyathit had said, "You are very much alive. Dead person can't speak, now eat your food." Then Vyathit heard the voice of Devkota drenched in sorrow, "Young widow is the cook of our home; we have to wear *dhoti* to enter the kitchen, but, I don't have one; how can I appear in front of her in just a loincloth? How can a person be alive who can't even buy a *dhoti*?" Due to his financial condition, he often used to feel himself dead even while breathing. Devkota had mentioned the 'incident of pinching by Vyathit' in his famous poem 'The Lunatic'.

Devkota was in such a poor condition that he had eaten corn, beans and radish as his main food for many days. At that time he needed food only to sustain his life. He ultimately suffered from cancer and his cancer prohibited him to give tuition the way he used to. So, he was compelled to live with a hungry stomach. In fact, after the merchants had come to know about his cancer, they had stopped providing him things in credit and the money as loan. Nepal Academy stopped providing him salary. Later, he came to know it was done with conspiracy. Then he wrote an application letter to King Mahendra. Devkota humbly

requested the King, “If the King showed the generosity by providing the remuneration of eight months, it would be easy for me to get back to work after paying all debts.”

Devkota couldn't be claimed to have not earned money. Among the intellectuals of his era, people earning more than him were rarely heard of. But neither he nor his wife seriously thought about using their money properly. In this context, Devkota once had told his friend Hari Shrestha, “I had earned eighty thousand rupees in two and half years but within three years I am in debt of eight thousand rupees.” Hari Shrestha further said, “Devkota used to earn money to his utmost capacity, but his wife would spend that money in *harikirtan*.” Devkota's state of poverty was associated with the fact that the money was being spent on the religious program named *harikirtan* and for its organizer Kavi Prasad Gautam.

Devkota remained in financial crisis and was debt-ridden, and this was the cause that made him bedridden. Before he could see the easy and practical financial life, he had to leave his mortal being. Devkota's crave to be wealthy with property and money remained as a dream. His earnings never remained saved. He could not save from his income and earnings. The deteriorating financial situation ultimately became a force that put his source of inspiration to an end. So, he never became 'Laxmi' Prasad in the real sense; rather, he remained as *Saraswati Prasad* (the man with profound knowledge), *Lekhnath* (lord of writings), and *Buddhiman* (a wise man).

Devkota's Service and Politics

Devkota wrote a letter in 1943 to Nepali Language Translation Council. The detail of the letter was, "Since our language vocabulary is not remarkably large in number, it is necessary for us to make roots of the words incessantly from the prevailing words, and lead Nepali language to a height of prosperity." According to Pandit Badrinath Bhattarai, Devkota's idea was greatly discussed in Nepali Language Translation Council. Balkrishna Sama came to a decision to offer a service to Devkota in the Nepali Language Translation Council.

Devkota got service after ten years of his completion of B.A., B.L. on August 27, 1943. He joined Nepali Language Translation Council as a service holder. That was a golden opportunity of his life. He was designated as a writer to write Nepalese books. His monthly salary was 70 rupees. He was delighted with his service and salary.

Puskar Shumsher JBR, a story writer, was the chairperson of Nepali Language Translation Council while Devkota joined the service. Devkota's father Tilamadhav Devkota and brother Lekhnath Devkota had remained Puskar Shumsher's teachers; but, despite this fact, Devkota had to face the trial in front of Puskar Shumsher Rana for his job.

When Devkota had joined the Council, Nepali Language Publishing Committee and Nepali Language

Translation Council shared the same room as their office; they only had separate racks for records and files. Baburam Acharya, Purna Prasad Brahman, Khadga Man Malla, Sagarmani Aadi, Ram Chandra Adhikari, Basudev Luitel, Madhav Prasad Ghimire and Gopal Prasad Rimal were working as service holders in that period.

The writers employed in the Nepali Language Translation Council had the work of writing. Other writers would hardly write two pages with much strain in a day, whereas, Devkota would have completed ten pages of writing. Furthermore, he used to please his officers with the intention of protecting his job. In fact, during that period, he had written with pleasure as well as under compulsion. His written note in this context had been published:

*The fear of losing the job worth seventy rupees,
seventy thousand veins shiver.*

Devkota and Balkrishna Sama used to involve themselves in intellectual discussions during the days when Devkota was working in the Nepali Language Translation Council. The subject of their discussion used to be the existence of God. Sama was not in favour of 'existence of God', whereas, Devkota used to debate in favour of the 'existence of God'. People used to gather to hear and observe their discussions.

Devkota would work in his own way. He often used to accomplish the tasks assigned to him by his officer. But one fine day, he sensed his job and position at stake. After working for about three years in the Nepali Language Council, he once again had become unemployed because that particular institution itself was dismissed at that time. Hence, Devkota faced financial crisis to manage the daily

affairs of his household. It was luck for him again that the council was reestablished and Devkota was back on service.

Devkota was able to secure the job of a Professor on June 12, 1946. It was after 13 years of his graduation that he was appointed in Tri-Chandra College. He was the first Nepali citizen to join Tri-Chandra College as a Professor from among the graduates. He had to teach Nepali and English literature. Besides that, he never missed opportunities to give lectures on science to the students of art and to demonstrate in the science lab. Likewise, he made the students of science recite Nepali and English literature.

Devkota enjoyed using his title of 'Professor' in his literary creations as well. In those days, he used to write 'Prof.' before his name and 'B.A., B.L.' after his name in his writings. He used to publish his books with his initials as *Prof. Laxmi Prasad Devkota, B.A., B.L.*

He used to earn one hundred rupees from Tri-Chandra College. But after deducting the government's *salami* (salutary money), he used to receive ninety five rupees only. He used to earn a total of one hundred sixty two rupees per month including the salary of Nepali Language Translation Council and Tri-Chandra College. Devkota never used to count how much he had. He used to count while giving some to others though. Shyam Das Baishnav used to be there to help him count his earnings.

Puskar Shumsher did not want to include some of the points written by Devkota in the epic of *Shakuntal*. Devkota was perturbed by this incident. He would face the *Ranas* as soon as he raised his head, since Puskar Shumsher and Devkota had shared the same room as their office. Once when Puskar Shumsher was present in the office, Devkota told Balkrishna Sama, "*Babu saheb!*" (respected term to

address the *Ranas*) I want to recite a new couplet from my new epic *Shakuntal*.” Sama permitted Devkota to recite the lines. On hearing Devkota, Sama told him, “You have written well, Devkota!” When, Sama belched out his dialogue, Puskar Shumsher reproved Devkota, “*Baje!* (used to address brahmins) are you trying to cover my brilliance in front of my brother? You are here to write narrative poems. You have to write the way I want! Otherwise, leave this place if you don’t want to work, and do what you have to also with the person, Shyam Das Baishnav, that you have brought.” Devkota in a fit of rage replied, “I am not the Brahmin who earns money by priesthood; I can leave this kind of job immediately.” Devkota went out of the office fuming, after the heated argument. Mrigendra Shumsher JBR heard about the case and he made Puskar Shumsher accept his mistake. After that, Devkota started his job in the office and continued writing *Shakuntal*.

Devkota would never turn up around office on time. His wife had to remind him ‘it’s 10 o’clock’ repeatedly, after the clock stroked ten. Despite his wife’s efforts to send him office on time, Devkota never used to reach Nepali Language Translation Council and Tri-Chandra College on time. These offices were in the same premises in those days. Despite being late in both of the offices, his officer and students were never against him, because all of them were familiar with Devkota's soppiness.

Devkota, even while working at Tri-Chandra College and Nepali Language Translation Council, used to teach tuition classes from dawn. During the holidays in the office, he used to give tuition from dusk to night. He used to teach Mathematics, Geography and History along with English and Nepali literature. His tuition fee was fixed and he did not compromise in terms of it. If someone wished to study at

lower rate, his reply would be, “Why should you take tuition? Leave it. But, if you want to study, bring the complete fee.” Goma, a litterateur had been a victim of the particular manner of Devkota in 1946. He had told Goma, “Okay, Goma! I would make you capable enough to pass Matriculation from Banaras or Patna University within a year with first division marks. How much are you paying me? I’ve been taking a lumpsum of five hundred rupees.” After hearing Devkota’s demand, Goma felt it as a bolt from the blue. Devkota always had a feeling of uneasiness to teach poor students. He used to say, “The one who doesn’t have money should labour hard and should go for self study at home.” Many cunning students had deceived Devkota and studied without paying a single penny. So, afterwards he started teaching the students, generally taking money in advance.

Devkota also got the title of ‘Professor’ in Padma Kanya College in 1955. He taught English language in Padma Kanya College. Devkota succeeded through his teaching to leave an ever-lasting impression of his personality among the girls studying in that college. One of his students, Shanta Shrestha, a litterateur says, “I have been taught by many teachers, but I didn’t see any teacher as influential as Devkota. I always remember Devkota as a very capable teacher. Along with teaching, he gave me inspiration to write poems.” Devkota taught for four months in Padma Kanya College. He became Professor in Commerce College on September 25, 1955, where he had taught for three months only. In fact, when Devkota started becoming too sentimental, the college administration couldn’t bring him into compromise. He had been rejected from this place. This made him feel frustrated.

Devkota busied himself to bring his life in the direct political concerns. Thus, King Tribhuvan through his royal proclamation nominated him in the Advisory Council on

April 13, 1952. The Council was formed with 21 members at the time. After the formation of the Council, Nepali National Congress, a political party, decided, “This newly formed Advisory Council is a mere deception.” But, that did not stop the Council to set up its office. Devkota filed his nomination for the post of Chairperson in the election of the Council, but was defeated.

Devkota gradually stepped on to actively engage in the political activities. King Tribhuvan formed the second Advisory Council. The King nominated Devkota as a member of Advisory Council on April 13, 1954. After the demise of King Tribhuvan, Devkota was nominated in the same post by King Mahendra. He had been nominated in the post of Member of Advisory Council from among the intellectuals. He was very enthralled at the nomination into this post. He presented himself as a very active member in the parliament during his service tenure. At that time, he had presented himself as the candidate of opposition leader, and was elected too. The then member of Advisory Council was considered as a Member of Parliament of the present day.

Devkota was known not only as the leader of opposition, but also as a keen speaker. In the process, once he had involved himself in the preparation of a strong speech from the opposition front. He did not sleep for the whole night in order to complete his writing, but he could not attend the parliament since he became sick the next day. But the very next day he informed the members of his front about the details, but his friends commented bitterly, “This is a stupid work!” This made Devkota very sad. Thus, he tore the speech that he had written with continuous effort and had thrown it in the corner. But still, Devkota delivered a brilliant speech in the session of Advisory Council. Devkota, on the basis of factual information, even criticized the budget

presented by the Prime Minister Matrika Prasad Koirala. In fact, Devkota was an efficient economist too. Because of Devkota, Matrika Prasad Koirala had resigned from the post of Prime Minister.

Devkota had reached the Advisory Council as a Nepali, and remained active throughout his stay in the Council with the full spirit of Nepali. In those days, members from *Terai*, southern part of the country, had started speaking Hindi language in the Advisory Council. When the voice rose in the frown of speaking in the Council in National language, the members representing from *Terai* boycotted the house. The house resumed after two days, but the manners and language of members representing *Terai*, remained the same. This made Devkota furious and he started delivering his speech in English. In the ruling of the Chairperson, Devkota had replied, “If it is permitted to speak Hindi in Nepal, which is a semi-national language of a country, then why is it not allowed to speak in English language which is internationally accepted? The country that claims ‘Hindi’ as its national language also conducts its overall business in English, which is spoken in the United Nations. Indian Parliamentary language is English. Which category of caste and region does Hindi language represent as mother tongue? Most of the members here don’t understand Hindi, but I don’t see people who don’t understand English except few in this house.”

In the context of Devkota’s speech at that time, Kul Chandra Koirala, a litterateur has written “Devkota’s logic was substantial and the answer was not easy. The representatives of *Terai* too had no answer.” Then there was a huge discussion in the Advisory Council and finally it was decided that the representatives of *Terai* should learn Nepali language and speak Nepali in the Assembly. Devkota felt a

heavy heart at this. He had told his friend Kul Chandra Koirala, “I am one of the people who wished democracy to flourish in Nepal, but I never knew democracy would stand against my own language.”

Devkota was not particularly satisfied even in the dignified post at Advisory Council, because Bal Chandra Sharma was the Chairperson of the very Council. In the context of Council, Devkota used to say, “Bal Chandra Sharma is harassing the members as if they are monkeys and he is enjoying himself.” These two were on the cold war since they were in Banaras in 1947.

King Mahendra had called the representatives of different parties and organizations in the Royal Palace on May 8, 1955 while Devkota was a member of the Advisory Council. The objective of this meeting was to discuss on “What should be done in the country now?” Devkota had delivered his speech before the King Mahendra representing the Nepali Writers Association. At that time, standing in front of King, Devkota in a cordial manner had said, “The existing government has not done anything. These people haven’t felt the pain and significance of our country. The direct rule of Your Majesty must come to an end. For the democratic system of governance, we must have election in our country.”

After Devkota had expressed his opinion in the palace on June 10, 1955, the Advisory Council was dissolved. Then, Devkota with the inspiration of his nephew Keshav Chandra Gautam joined K. I. Singh’s political party.

After Devkota had expressed his opinion in front of the King, Dr. K. I. Singh was pardoned by King Mahendra. Therefore, he entered Rasuwa and reached Sundarimal from Lhasa, China. A huge crowd had gathered to welcome Dr.

K. I. Singh. Devkota was one of them; because, he was the chairperson of the committee of the welcome ceremony.

While entering Kathmandu from Sundarjal, Devkota was together with Singh in the front seats of the jeep. The crowd of the public at that time was very attractive. In fact, Devkota gradually was inspired by the nationalistic line of Dr. Singh. Specially, because of the inclination of Devkota's nephew Keshav Chandra Gautam towards Singh, Devkota was more influenced. This is why Devkota was close to Dr. Singh's United Democratic Front. Devkota had hoped that Dr. Singh would do something for the country. Similarly, Dr. Singh too was delighted with the fact that such a great person like Devkota was in his party. In those days, these two people had fondness, respect and faith for each other.

A program of delivering a speech by Dr. K. I. Singh was organized at Tundikhel on September 24, 1955. It was the first public program organized after Dr. Singh was granted a pardon by the King. Devkota had addressed the program as the chairperson of the program. To listen to the speech of Devkota, the crowd at Tundikhel was full to the capacity. Devkota had delivered a ceaseless speech about nation, nationality and democracy spellbinding the huge crowd for nearly one and half hour.

It had been decided to establish a university in Nepal on March 31, 1956. On the occasion of annual commemoration of late King Tribhuvan, his wives Kanti Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah and Ishwari Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah declared to establish Tribhuvan University. They themselves were Chancellor and Pro-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, and they had also appointed Devkota as a member of Tribhuvan University Commission.

Chooda Mani Bandhu, a litterateur, had received the draft of the sketch of the university personally written by Devkota. Bandhu in this context has written, “He has mentioned not only the idea of making Nepal a center for international studies, but also hoisted the need to establish the faculties of vocational subjects like Commerce, Law, Education, Forestry, Medicine, Agriculture and Technical Science that could be useful for Nepal in the long run.” According to Bandhu, Devkota had said that in view of supporting the development of Nepal, education of arts and sciences should be provided by the same university. In addition, he had made it a point that 80 percent of the medium of education should be in Nepali language.

With the establishment of Nepal Academy, under the Chancellorship of King Mahendra, Devkota too was nominated as a member. Member of the Academy, in those days used to get the monthly allowances of rupees six hundred. After this, Devkota’s family didn’t have to face the economic crisis. On top of that Devkota generally did not have to go to the Academy. He was free from restriction despite being the member of Academy *pragya* (scholar). Actually, the Chancellor of the Academy, due to the high respect for Devkota, had let him remain free. Therefore, he used to write staying at home. According to Kanchan Pudasaini, a poet, “The Chancellor of Academy King Mahendra had told Devkota, “It’s not compulsory for you to come to the office, you may write staying at your home.” In this context, Basu Sashi, a litterateur, had said, “Though Devkota wasn’t compelled to be in the Academy, his allowances, however, would reach his home every month.” Devkota had appointed Kanchan Pudasaini as his personal assistant at that time. On the very day of appointment, Devkota made Pudasaini write an essay entitled *Sandhe*

(bull). Devkota used to dictate it to Pudasaini who used to write down accordingly. Pudasaini was nicknamed Kanchan Pudasaini instead of Ramkrishna Pudasaini hereon by Devkota because of his beautiful writing of letters. He used to receive one hundred and fifty rupees per month from the Academy.

Devkota joined the Ministry soon after he was appointed a Member of Nepal Academy on July 26, 1957. In the cabinet formed under the Prime Ministership of Dr. K. I. Singh, Devkota was given the Ministry of Education and Autonomous Self-Governance. According to Devkota's niece and advisor of K. I. Singh, Keshav Chandra Gautam, King Mahendra and K. I. Singh played a dominant role to make Devkota a minister.

On the day Devkota had become a minister, he was accompanied from his house to the Ministry by Satya Mohan Joshi, *Shatabdi Purush* (Man of the century). After becoming the minister, Devkota shifted to 'Salyan House' at Dillibazar from his home. Birendra Bahadur Shah, son of the King of Salyan, Gehendra Bahadur Shah, was one of the helping hands for Devkota in that period. In fact, Devkota's student Birendra Bahadur Shah was reader and lover of literature; that is why, he had additional respect for Devkota.

During his ministership, Devkota took a very important decision in the context of nationality. Before that, Hindi language too was in use as the medium of education in Nepal. He established a compulsory rule that Nepali language should be the medium of education in the educational institutions of Nepal. He also established the practice of using National language in government offices. In his active initiation, more than five thousand *ropanis* of land in Kirtipur had been acquired, giving appropriate

compensations for those whose land was taken. Later, Tribhuvan University was officially established there.

Devkota remained a minister till November 14, 1957 for the period of 110 days in total. He was offered hospitality by many during his ministership. Then after, he had problems with his stomach. When he was disassociated from the post of minister, he said, “I took the power and swayed the flag as minister due to the interest and persuasion of my wife. But both of these were not suitable for the nature of my life.” In fact, he had accepted the post of minister as per the request of Mana Devi. In this context, his wife had said, “When Tanka Prasad had tried to make him a minister, I had stopped him; but afterwards when Dr. K. I. Singh asked him to take the post, I had persuaded him to become minister at least for a day.”

Devkota was a great patriot. He never used to kneel down to anyone in the question of nationality. He used to say, “My motherland is my world! My reality! My truth! And a solid existence.” He had further elaborated, “Love for the motherland and importance of Nepal is known to each flesh spark in my heart. Had I been in an infinite distance of a corner of the world, and if a celestial musician, fond of travelling would have asked me, ‘Who thou are?’, I would have replied - ‘Nepali’. Death descending from heaven, if asked me, ‘What do you want?’ my reply would be, ‘Welfare of Nepal!’ Devkota’s nationalism was burning high inside him, even a day before his demise. At that time, being unable to write, he had recorded his voice on tape, “May Nepal, my motherland and Nepali people remain prosperous and flourished for ever.”

Devkota's Cultural Work

The Great Poet Devkota was active in opening a library in Kathmandu after he had appeared in the exams of Bachelor of Arts. He had seen the 'Singha Library' and Public Libraries in Patna while he was in Patna to appear in the matriculation examinations. In the beginning of the year 1930, in an attempt to achieve his wish, he submitted an appeal prepared with the signature of 46 people onto the Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher JBR. In the written statement, he had made a request to the Prime Minister to grant permission to open a public library in Nepal.

Ram Chandra Adhikary, among 46 of Devkota's fellows, was a spy in service to the *Ranas*. The particular description regarding the opening of the library was presented to the *Ranas* in quite opposite sense by Adhikary. The *Ranas* didn't let the chance go to punish the 45 people, except Adhikary. Bhim Shumsher made the strict order to imprison each one of them for three years. This was heard by Keshar Shumsher as well. He told the *Rana* Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher that the idea of opening a library was not bad. Then, those 45 people were made to write an excuse letter, with a note that they would not get involved in the works of public welfare for 12 years. Bhim Shumsher then had repeatedly said, "If I came to know that you tried to make even any consultation regarding this subject, I'd put you all in prison for twelve years."

Then, Devkota and his fellows were ordered to pay one hundred rupees per person as penalty. In this way, the *Rana* treasury received a total of forty five hundred rupees, half of which was given as a reward by Bhim Shumsher to the spy Ram Chandra Adhikary.

Devkota also took the initiatives to establish the custom of celebrating *gai jatra*, carnival of cows, as a day of humour and satire. He accordingly had written a comic mirth *Jama Marda Buhari* on September 21, 1944. His comic was appreciated everywhere.

Devkota believed that the cultural awareness would evoke the public consciousness. Therefore, he had gone as far as Kolkata to get his song recorded. About 10 years after his Kolkata visit, he had his voice recorded during live broadcast from radio station. 'Radio Nepal', stationed in the capital city of Kathmandu, was on air in December, 1946; and used to broadcast only the hymns and songs. Kali Bhakta Panta had written that Devkota in those days used to sing songs composed by himself.

Devkota said, "Cultural Revolution is possible through language and literature." At the end of 1947, he agreed to establish 'Nepali Literary Council' along with Kedar Man Vyathit, Hridayachandra Singh Pradhan, Renu Lal Singh and Tripurabar Singh. Accordingly, an application was submitted to the *Ranas* in the names of Devkota, Vyathit and Pradhan. In the application, the request was made before the Prime Minister to let them establish a literary organization to publish a magazine named *Sahitya-Shrot* and organise literary conference. They were granted permission as per their request. Kedar Man Vyathit was made the chairperson of the organization. After some time, the organization was formally inaugurated. Nepali Literary Council was inaugurated by the

Director General of the Education, Mrigendra Shumsher JBR on May 15, 1947.

Nepali Literary Council had organized a historic three-day literary conference in Saraswati Sadan from May 28 to 30, 1947. There were more than four hundred people who had bought ticket to attend the conference in order to listen the speech of Devkota. But, the auditorium had the capacity of only three hundred chairs. Due to the overwhelming number of people and suffocation, Lekhnath Paudyal fell down on the ground and became unconscious for a while.

The speech delivered by Devkota in the conference was acclaimed overwhelmingly. His speech was not limited to the language, literature, nation and nationality; it also included the expressions on the life and living in the whole cosmos. Ultimately, he drew the conclusions – Literature is the supreme subject of the world, emotion is electricity, though thinner than the sky; thought is a power, though it is thinner than the air; imagination is civilization, it is the imagination oriented to the service for the nation. The atomic energy of thought shudders, extinguishes and builds the world, it is more powerful than a sword.

The senior most literary figures of the capital were present in the Saraswati Sadan to listen to the touching speech by Devkota. One of the conscious audiences of Devkota, litterateur Krishnachandra Singh Pradhan, had said, “Laxmi Prasad Devkota was the chairperson of the conference. Devkota delivered the speech before the dispersal of the meeting as the chairperson of the conference. I still remember the speech written in very small letters in thirty-two pages of a notebook. The *Rana* directors too were present at the conference. In one hand, he had the notebook, full of his

written speech, which used to flap in tune with his movement. He hardly stared on the note, though he used to glance it at a time and then used to speak fluently for an hour with no pause in between. The flow of his speech was like the flow of the mountain river.” The conference was remarkable for Nepali language and literature. Nepal Literary Council is said to be the first literary organization established as a non-governmental organization.

Devkota’s active involvement had helped the popularity of Nepali Literary Council grow in a pace. This had added faith, affection and respect of a lot of people towards this organization. Devkota had suddenly fled to Banaras. The executives and members sat for a meeting in connection with Devkota’s flee to the foreign land. The officials in the meeting removed Devkota’s name from the chairperson. Balkrishna Sama had been selected as chairperson in the vacant seat. Balkrishna Sama, Hridayachandra Singh Pradhan and Krishnachandra Singh Pradhan would always praise Devkota.

Devkota was aware and conscious regarding social works. Since he was conscious, he used to manage time for social welfare as possible. However, lack of uniformity in his social works had been observed. Devkota would come on the ground in the social service as per the need of the time and request for his involvement in the social works.

Devkota was more lauded after his return from Banaras. He was welcomed by the public and was requested to deliver speech. In the process, Nepal Drama Association was inaugurated on March 3, 1951 at Bhandarkhal, Kathmandu. Devkota was the chief orator of the program. He wrote a critical essay entitled ‘The Inaugural of Nepali Drama Association’ particularly for the inaugural program.

That essay became very sensational in the inaugural program. In that essay, Devkota wrote on himself :

"Mr. Laxmi Prasad Devkota said – Drama is the reflection of life imaginary and real, and in poem imaginary or creative, and in other creation, its importance was to give sound to life, because here, it involved not only imagination but karma (work) as well, and there were the glimpses of natural exhibition of gestures and postures in."

In 1951, King Tribhuvan declared that Lekhnath Paudyal would be conferred with the title of *kavisiromani* (Poet of the Poets) and would be provided with the monthly allowance of Rs. 200 from the state. Three years later, on the occasion of his 71st birthday, Lekhnath was honored publicly by boarding him in a special chariot on January 4, 1955. He was also offered an appreciation letter along with the cash of Rs. 5000. Devkota was the chief person to lead that chariot festival of Lekhnath Paudyal.

Devkota was actively involved in social works. According to Chooda Mani Bandhu, "Devkota had offered his help for many non-governmental organisations, institutions, councils and political parties. If he was found delivering a religious discourse on a day, another day he would be found active in a program organized by communists. He would be writing a pamphlet for *Gorkhadal*, a political party and he also used to be busy with the inauguration of Dr. K. I. Singh's political party. At times he used to be busy in writing letters of felicitations for Chamber of Commerce, and at other times he would be found busy in delivering his welcome speech for Chinese delegations. In the process of his social work, Devkota became the member of executive committee of Nepal Cultural Council in 1951. Devkota thereon continued his

utmost help and support in flourishing Nepalese language and literature.

Devkota was a remarkable genius. He used to mesmerize the audience with his philosophy on Hinduism and culture, even at the functions organised by the communists. In the same way, while delivering his religious discourse, he used to present his deliberations even in the context of the philosophy and doctrines of Marx, Lenin and Mao. His intellectual indepthness were reflected in his speeches in a quite different way. He used to make his remarkable and strong deliberations irrespective of the areas, where it may be religion, culture, literature, politics or whatsoever.

In the chairmanship of Devkota, '*Gita Geha*' was established in Kathmandu in 1951. The salient objective of this organization was to give exposure to the culture and philosophy. Devkota had delivered speeches on philosophy on different programs organized on different occasions. He had conducted many programs on behalf of this organization. The auditorium would always get packed to capacity to listen to his speech in the programs.

Once, on the occasion of '*Gita Anniversary*', Kavi Prasad Gautam had organized a program in Kathmandu. Devkota was the convener of the program. *Ayurvedacharya* Narayan Prasad Aryal too had delivered a speech on insistence of Devkota. Aryal, in the program had expressed his dissatisfaction on the lifestyle of Kavi Prasad in these words, "A hypocrite like Kavi Prasad, who conducts dramatic interpretation of the episodes of Lord Krishna, who makes others' wives eat his leftovers and drink the water that had cleansed his feet, deserves to get killed, and killing him won't be a sin." After the speech by Aryal was

over, the public stood against Gautam and got ready to manhandle him. Devkota had sneaked into the crowd and begged forgiveness for Gautam. He saved Gautam from being smashed. Then after Devkota had said, “If *Guruji* (Gautam) had got thrashing today, I would have been blamed. Because, *Guruji* has noticed that I had insisted Aryal to speak in the program.”

In the active participation of Mahananda Sapkota, ‘Educational Conference’ had been held on October 4, 1952. Mahananda Sapkota, a litterateur on behalf of the Nepali Language Promotion Organisation, had invited the trinity of Nepali literature, Lekhnath Paudyal, Balkrishna Sama and Laxmi Prasad Devkota. The following day i.e on October 5, Devkota recited English poems in typical *Tamang* tune and rejoicingly presented a lyric in the cultural program organized by Ilam Students’ Union.

In December 1952, Nepal Students’ Union and Himanchal Students’ Union of Kolkata jointly organized a huge conference of students, under the *kharibot*, a tree at Tundikhel of Kathmandu. Devkota was the chief guest and chairperson of the convention, and he had even inaugurated the program. The speech delivered by Devkota in that program was remarkable and worth mentioning. He, in that program, had recited a poem as well. According to Ram Hari Joshi, politicians like Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ganesh Man Singh were also present in the program. Student leaders from different parts of the country along with the ones from India, Malaya and Burma had also participated in the program. Bhim Darshan Rokka had come from Bhagsu of India to participate in the convention. Devkota made Rokka stay in Nepal. According to Ram Hari Joshi, a politician, “Bhim Darshan Rokka established a new trend in the poetry of Nepali literature. He experimented

Sayari, a sort of Urdu poetry in Nepali literature, and popularized this genre.”

The next day, after Devkota had inaugurated the Students’ Convention at the Kharibot, a poetic symposium had been organized at Shashi Bhawan in Jhamsikhel. The symposium had been organised under the joint effort of Nepal Students’ Union and Himanchal Students’ Union. Devkota was the chief guest of this symposium as well, and he had delivered a meaningful speech and had recited his poems.

A huge literary convention was organized by Jaya Bageshwori Library on January 31, 1953. Devkota had chaired this program, which was peculiar in many respects. Bhairav Aryal in this regard had written, “Unironed cap with small prints on his head and grey muffler nicely placed on his shoulder had given him the look of some pandits. On top of that he was reciting the *veda* in a loud voice, matching the movements of his hand, left no doubt some impression on the audience that he was none other than a priest. After some time, it came to the knowledge of everyone present there that the *veda* was not being recited in Sanskrit, but was in English. And, the question, “Who is the great Pandit reciting the *veda* in English?” was in no time answered. A gentleman sitting next disdainfully explained that it was none other than Devkota himself.” He further added, “The deliberations of Devkota included a mixture of some original and some difficult words.”

Nepal Writers’ Association was established in 1951. Shiva Regmi had presented the fact that the organization had been reformed in a new shape in the guidance of collective chairmanship of *kavisiromani* Lekhnath Paudyal, *Natyasmrat* Balkrishna Sama, *Mahakavi* Laxmi Prasad Devkota and *Yugakavi* Siddhicharan Shrestha in 1955. The

newly reformed association's executive committee included Madhav Prasad Ghimire, Hridayachandra Singh Pradhan, Bijay Malla, Ishwar Baral, Janardan Sama, Bhim Nidhi Tiwari, Govinda Bahadur Malla 'Gothale', Ratna Dhoj Joshi, Kedar Man Vyathit, Rudra Raj Pandey, Bhawani Bhikchu, Purna Bahadur M.A., Satya Mohan Joshi, Dharma Raj Thapa and Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala. In the working committee, members of the association were Narayan Prasad Banskota, Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, Shyam Das Baishnav, Keshav Raj Pindali and Chittaranjan Nepali. Shiva Regmi informed that the constitution amendment committee of the association had Siddhicharan Shrestha, Balkrishna Sama and Bijay Malla.

Devkota's dedication in the cultural awareness was an inspiration for the Nepalese society. His presence in the organization formed by scholars used to be taken as the subject of pride. Therefore, Devkota was associated in many organizations. Ishwar Baral regarding this subject had written, "Devkota perhaps didn't remember the number of social and cultural organizations he was associated with as the official member."

Devkota used to say that symposiums on poems are the strong sources to preserve culture. Recitation of poems was one of his special relishes. He even used to leave the served food and reach the program venue if someone requested to recite poems. Once he had taken the 'sheep' as a symbol for warp and woof of his poem. In fact, when he was pondering on 'sheep', the circumstances of the country was such that the *Rana* regime in a way had tried to make the Nepali citizens 'sheep'. So, he published the poem in 'Sharada' magazine '*Make me a Sheep*' as a political satire to the *Rana* regime in 1947. He liked this poem among others and he recited this poem on many occasions.

Devkota had recited the poem ‘*Make me a Sheep*’ in Dattatreya of Bhaktapur on September 8, 1955. According to Tejeshwar Babu Gwanga, the poem symposium was organized by Gyan Bikash Mandal – Bhaktapur in the coordination of Madan Krishna Hada. No sooner had Devkota recited the poem, Fatte Bahadur Singh uprooted some grass from the ground and placed on Devkota’s palm. Devkota seemed puzzled. With grass placed on Devkota’s palm, Singh questioned, “Haven’t you recited a poem asking to make you a sheep?”

*I am extremely tired, Oh! God
Make me a sheep*

Devkota established Epic Academy on his own chairmanship in 1955. Bijay Malla was the secretary and Madav Prasad Ghimire, Bhim Darshan Rokka, Shankar Lamichhane were the members of that Academy.

Indian Embassy organized a poetic symposium in its premises on January 15, 1958. Devkota had chaired the convention. Eleven reputed and renowned poets of Hindi literature including Ramdhari Singh ‘Dinkar’ as a litterateur too had participated in the convention. They were reciting their poems in Hindi language which was not understood by Nepali and foreigners; and Devkota used to recite them in English version. Lekhnath Paudyal, Balkrishna Sama, Siddhicharan Shrestha, Kedar Man Vyathit along with the reputed personalities from different countries were present at the convention. Devkota’s intellectual level and affection for poetry had been praised by many ambassadors present there.

Devkota as a Vice-Chancellor of ‘Nepal Rastriya Vidyapith’ had gone to Birgunj in 1958 to attend ‘Vidyapith’s Convocation’. Devkota’s speech left the people of Birgunj

astounded and wonderstruck at Devkota's unique power of eloquence in speech and guise.

Devkota had gathered ample experiences from Literary Academy, Nepal Cultural Council and Writers' Association, which evoked him to draft a plan for an Academy at government level. Bal Chandra Sharma too had made a plan of the same kind. Both of them had submitted the documents of their plans to King Mahendra. Nepal Academy was formed with King Mahendra as its Chancellor on June 22, 1957. Since, Bal Chandra Sharma was the then Minister for Education, he was made the Vice-Chancellor of the Academy.

In the initial list of Royal Nepal Academy, Lekhnath Paudyal was not included. Devkota had met the then Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya and had told him, "How would the Academy look without the *Kavishiromani* Lekhnath Paudyal?" Acharya had replied Devkota, "Bal Chandra Sharma doesn't even want to hear the name of Lekhnath. He jumps high whenever he hears the name of Lekhnath." Devkota, replying to Acharya, had said, "If he jumps high, you should jump higher!" Acharya could not do anything in this regard. Finally, Devkota succeeded to make *Kavishiromani* a member of the Academy by persuading King Mahendra. Other members of the Academy in that period were Somnath Sigdel, Tulsi Man Singh, Bhawani Bhikchu, Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Siddhicharan Shrestha, Balkrishna Sama, Madhav Prasad Ghimire and Yagya Raj Sharma. Royal Nepal Academy had been renamed into 'Nepal Rajkiya Pragya Pratisthan'. In the present context the same Academy is known as Nepal Pragya Pratisthan.

Devkota's Children

Laxmi Prasad Devkota and Mana Devi Devkota welcomed parenthood after four years of their nuptial ties. It so happened when Devkota was ascending the stairs of his student life; he became the father of his children one after another. Laxmi Prasad and Mana Devi were parents to nine children: five daughters and four sons, counting from the first born to the last born.

Devkota's eldest daughter Sabitri was born on January 3, 1929. She was deprived from getting education. Educating women was not an accepted practice those days. She was skilled in domestic or household activities. She was gentle, sober and talented. Sabitri was the pride of Devkota's family.

Devkota wished his daughter to be married in a grand manner. He took some loan as well. He had invited many people by distributing nuts, as per tradition; whereas he had given invitation cards, in his own handwriting, with red ink to some dear ones, elders and other important personalities. He had also handed Balkrishna Sama an invitation card, in his own handwriting which read:

*To,
Major Colonel Bal Krishna Junga Bahadur Rana
Invitation Card*

You are humbly requested to attend the matrimonial ceremony of my eldest daughter on Sunday, May 7, 1944. I hope you would grace the function and mark an honor to me.

As you wish!

Yours truly

Laxmi Prasad Devkota

Dillibazar

Kalyannath Regmi, husband of Devkota's eldest daughter, desired to start his career entering into service. He became 'Section Officer' in the Department of Education. When Devkota was a minister, he even became personal assistant to Devkota. Regmi had been the supporter and helping hand of Devkota even before and during his ministerial takeover. He used to accompany Devkota during his visits and programs. Sabitri Regmi in this context says, "My father and my husband were like a father and a son."

Devkota's daughter and son-in-law had nine children. One of the daughters among them passed away in her childhood. Saroj Regmi, the son of Regmi couple, along with their seven daughters – Sushma, Sanam, Sashi, Sama, Sugita, Shanti and Sabita - after marriage are running their domestic chores with their family. Similarly, along with one and half dozen grand children and nine great-grand children, Sabitri Regmi is busy in her domestic life. Her husband died of asthma and ulcer in 1988.

Devkota's eldest son Prakash was born in 1932. Prakash was extraordinary and generous from his childhood. He was studious too. His thread wearing ceremony was held in 1940. He was a great supporter of his father. Prakash was devoted to him. When Devkota had gone to Kashi in India

during the period of revolution, Prakash too had gone to Kashi, in search of his father. Prakash and Devkota shared a phase when they had to stay hungry. Prakash was interested in painting and literature. He was skilled in painting. His paintings were hung on the walls of 'Kavi Kunj'. He acted as an assistant to his father so far as the work of writing is concerned. He was renowned as a shadow of his father, among his relatives. Afterward, he managed to bring his father back to Nepal from Banaras.

Devkota had a great pride on Prakash's paintings. Once, litterateurs like Shyam Prasad Sharma, Ramesh Bikal and Phanindra Raj 'Khetala' had gone to visit Devkota in his house. Devkota used to tell them to have a look on the paintings by Prakash. Bikal had sketched this context as-- "This is a painting by my son Prakash. He is interested in painting." said the poet pointing to the colourful painting of Goddess Saraswati. He then pointed towards Prakash who had just entered into the room and said "Son! Show them the paintings that you have made."

In 1952, Prakash Prasad became ill all of a sudden. At that time, his examination of Intermediate of Arts was round the corner. During the same time, Devkota had travelled many places like Patna, Darjeeling and Gangtok in India. When Devkota had come back to Kathmandu after completing his visit, Prakash felt himself motivated and encouraged. Devkota was back home on November 22 after his journey.

Many litterateurs gathered to meet Devkota once he was home. Everyone asked about the news from Darjeeling and Sikkim. On the other hand, Prakash was fighting for his life. The next day Prakash's health condition got worse. Upon the request of his wife, Devkota went out to find a doctor; but even outside his house, his concentration remained largely

on his own literature. He had forgotten the fact that he had set out to find a doctor for his ill son's treatment, and had returned home in the night. When he arrived home, he looked at the face of his son and then went out to find the doctor once again. He directly reached the home of Dr. Yagya Raj Joshi. The doctor promised to visit the other day and thus denied to go along with him; so, Devkota returned home, without doctor. The next day his son Prakash passed away, without even getting the treatment from the doctor. Prakash Prasad died on November 26, 1952.

The demise of Prakash made Devkota weep bitterly. After the heart-rending incident, he used to loiter here and there aimlessly in anguish and grief. The incident had stroked his heart and mind as if by a thunderbolt. After that, his family had prohibited him to walk alone. Devkota was confined within his house and was kept under surveillance. In fact, the death of Prakash had given him additional mental shock.

Siddhicharan Shrestha was there together with Devkota to share the grief. Shrestha wrote an elegy at the demise of Prakash as well. A couplet from the same read:

*I can see that spots on you are yet boiling reserved,
As if the world is to snatch the soul that in you preserved.*

Devkota was taken to Palpa for diverting his mind, after 105 days of the demise of Prakash. Baikuntha Prasad Lakaul had invited Devkota to visit Palpa earlier, and finally he had been taken there by the Royal Advisor Khadga Man Singh. Palpa High School had grandly welcomed Devkota and he wrote and recited a poem entitled *Palpa*. As the reflection of his broken heart, he had written and recited one more poem and it was entitled *Sathi* (friend). Khadga Man Singh helped Devkota walk around Palpa and Devkota's composing of poems also continued there.

In the year 1935, Devkota's another daughter (without given name) was born to Devkota. She died within two months of her birth.

Devkota's second son Krishna Prasad was born in 1937. He had descended on the earth as the fourth child to the Devkota couple.

Krishna Prasad liked to study very much from his childhood; Krishna generally was close to his father. Devkota himself used to teach Krishna Prasad. The thread wearing ceremony of Krishna Prasad took place in 1946.

Once, when Devkota was ready to go to Banaras, Krishna pleaded him not to go, and even tried to stop Devkota from going to Banaras. Krishna Prasad had hidden his shoes praying, "Do not go anywhere leaving us father." But Devkota left his house to visit Banaras even on barefoot. Devkota had made up his mind firmly. So, he left for India leaving behind his wife and children.

His son Krishna Prasad suffered from typhoid when Devkota had gone abroad for a long time. During that period *Rana* army were mobilized all over the house of Devkota in search of him. Additionally, police force was in action to lock up all the rooms of his house. During the difficult times, Mana Devi Devkota had to take shelter in the neighborhood, even to manage hot water for Krishna. The stamping of boots of the *Rana* army used to give Krishna the impression of his father's footstep; feeling that the father had come home, Krishna would utter in a meek voice, "Father!" Then Mana Devi, consoling her son, used to say, "Father will come soon, my child!" Mana Devi used to wipe her tears with one hand and used to show affection to her son with the other.

There was a rumour among the neighbours of Devkota that he was involved in activities against the government. The fear of the *Ranas* had forced his neighbors remain in isolation from the Devkota's family. Krishna died on October 6, 1947 exactly after two months and seven days after Devkota had reached Banaras. Devkota family was drenched in tears after this tragic incident. Krishna Prasad's dead body could not even be taken to the crematory at that time, because the family didn't have a single penny. The dead body remained in the courtyard for a long time until a kind hearted gentleman gave some money around the evening to take the body to crematory; and then only the body was taken to Pashupati Aryaghat, crematory. Devkota had heard the death of his son in India; he burst into tears in grief at the demise of his son.

Ambika Devi is known as Devkota's second daughter. The daughter born earlier to Ambika Devi had died in her infancy, so her name couldn't be known. She was not counted by Devkota's family either. Therefore, Ambika Devi is counted as Devkota's second daughter.

Ambika Devi was born in June 1940. She learnt alphabet from her father. She was enrolled in Padma Kanya School. After completing her matriculation, she was enrolled in Padma Kanya College. After she completed her Intermediate of Arts, she participated in the open competition for scholarship provided by Ministry of Education. She got the scholarship after winning the competition and started her studies in Gujarat in India. She obtained her degree in Vocal under Fine Arts (M. Music) from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Gujarat.

Ambika Devi then joined 'Radio Nepal', and performed various remarkable tasks. She tried to bring a new wave in

songs and music. She was established in writing lyrics, composing music and singing songs. She had started her job as a 'Section Officer' in the Ministry of Communications.

Sixteen years old Ambika Devi tied her nuptial knot with Lokendranath Rimal. She had given birth to two sons, but the babies died in their infancy.

Ambika Devi's conjugal life wasn't a happy one. This led to her having an unpeaceful state of mind. As soon as she had entered into her married life, her household got the problems at the threshold. Her sacrifice couldn't make her husband Lokendranath Rimal positive towards her. In addition, her husband did not even lift his finger to support the domestic chores. Since her husband failed to bring even a penny for household, she took the responsibility and worked hard to fulfill the necessities. Afterwards, her husband was confined inside the house; because, he had paralysis. Ambika Devi served her husband for 18 years until he passed away in 2003.

Ambika Devi served her mother Mana Devi till her last breath. Ambika Devi stood true with her heart, words and action and had taken care of her mother till she was alive. She, furthermore, continued her support to her sister Meera. Ambika Devi stood as a strong guardian to her weak sister Meera. She had loved Meera as a baby on her lap. Pointing out to this part of her life, her younger sister Muna always said, "My sister Ambika is a *Goddess of Pity*. It's very hard to find someone as sacrificing as my sister in the world."

Meera was the third elderly daughter of Devkota. She was born in 1941. She sounded like a promising student during her childhood. People used to say, "Meera would become as learned as her father." She indeed had

ceaseless intellects. She was considered sharp and intelligent from her childhood. She was soft spoken and had a beautiful appearance.

Meera got her schooling from Padma Kanya Vidyashram. In her school life, she used to grasp all her books by heart. She used to answer all the questions more than the extent necessary to deal with. Her level of study was greater than her age. Her school teachers used to get astonished with her learning. Meera's study would never quench her thirst. She used to grasp the books that were to be taught in a year just within a month. She was equally talented in various skills. She never used to stay idle. Devkota used to feel fascinated by his daughter's dedication towards her studies and domestic chores.

In a way, Meera's extraordinariness had invited her destruction. In spite of her sharpness, she could not even manage herself to keep pace with her zeal. Gradually, she was in a deteriorating state. Her high intelligence started ascending towards explosion. In fact, she wanted to study medical science. When she didn't get chance to study that subject, she started getting irritated. She, time and again, tried to study medical science. But her wish was trashed in an ashtray by the agony of scarcity. Consequently, she fell into depression

Meera's ill health prohibited her from entering into married life also. Her personal life became pathetic and pitiable with passing of time. After some time, her books, so dear to her at one time, became like a fairy tale to her. Since Meera couldn't come out of the pit of depression, she became helpless; and so, someone was needed to look after and take care of her. She had lived under the protection of her mother, as long as her mother was alive. After the demise of her

mother, she was living under the support of her sister Ambika Devi. She had received some of the ancestral property. Because of her ancestral property, Ambika Devi didn't come across difficult times. She had received the house 'Kavi Kunj' earned by Devkota, along with the land covered by it as ancestral property. In Shanta Shrestha's views, Meera was in the pit of depression for decades and even though she obtained the land and property, she was living a life like that of a refugee.

Muna is the name of Devkota's youngest daughter. She was Bhuna by her pet name. She was born in September 1945. Devkota's creation 'Muna Madan' was one of the favorites of Mana Devi, and she had liked it so much that she kept her youngest daughter's name 'Muna' after Muna the female character of 'Muna Madan'. Then Devkota had told his wife, "Daughter would suffer the pain of separation, don't keep this name!" Devkota wanted his youngest daughter's name as 'Pushpalata'.

Muna did not have a sound health in her childhood. Her family didn't allow her to go outside to study and to play. Because, no sooner had she labored physically than she would suffer from fever. She had repeatedly fought with typhoid in her childhood. That is why, she was not sent to school. But, when she was at the age of understanding, she started going to school with her friends, and got enrolled at fifth grade at Padma Kanya Vidyashram.

The time Devkota was admitted at Shanta Bhawan Hospital, he was visited by many people, and one of them was Kamal Shah. At that time, Shah had made a promise that she would make his youngest daughter as her daughter and she would arrange everything for her education. Shah's words had brought a bit of joy in Devkota's eyes.

In the similar context, Princess Princep Shah had once said, stroking Muna's face, "Devkota's daughter is so pretty! Muna is so beautiful; one would like to keep her in one's eyes!" Kamal Shah had replied Princep Shah, "Princess! Muna is my daughter now; I have asked Muna from Devkota." But, it didn't accrue to the fate. After the demise of the Great Poet Devkota, the artificial mother and daughter didn't even meet. Finally, Muna's study was going astray. Nepal Government's decision to admit Muna in 'St. Mary's School' was not realized because of Kamal Shah. It was due to the polished and cheap words of the noble class, Muna was not able to continue her studies. Despite this, she was not disturbed in her journey towards her future. She attempted her studies from her own capacity from Padma Kanya Vidyashram. With her broken heart, she had once said, "We were of nowhere after father had left us."

Muna passed matriculation. She joined Ratna Rajya College to pursue Intermediate of Arts. She wanted a scholarship to study in Russia, but by that time, Nepal Government had already curtailed the quota of the scholarship for Russia. In this regard, Muna wrote a request letter, as suggested by Krishna Prasad Bhandari, which was approved. Finally, she got a chance to go to Russia.

Nepalese students welcomed Muna at the Moscow Airport when she arrived there. Because, she was the youngest daughter of the Great Poet; moreover, she was the first student to reopen government scholarship to go and study in Soviet Russia. Due to this reason, large number of students had gathered there to welcome Muna. Among the crowd, Govinda Prasad Ghimire too had appeared in front of Muna enthusiastically. After that, he would spend most of his time with Muna only.

Muna was attractive and beautiful. In her youth, Muna was beautiful as a fairy. Muna's sweet words and tinkling beauty hardly left any man from tempting. Govinda Prasad protected Muna with his care and affection in the foreign land.

Muna desired to study journalism in Russia. She had to study Russian language first. While she was still learning Russian language, she got involved with Govinda Prasad Ghimire. This couple wanted to live together for eternity, so they got married in Russia according to Hindu customs. On April 15, 1972, some Nepalese people were present at a five star hotel on the Kremlin Street of Russia. Nepalese students had raised funds in their own ways and had arranged 1500 Ruble to organize a dinner. Regarding this, Muna said, "My marriage was a grand one. I became a bride in the presence of all the Nepalese studying in Moscow."

After the completion of Engineering, Govinda Prasad Ghimire, Muna and her family returned to Nepal. Then after, Ghimire entered into job. The married life of Govinda and Muna was running smoothly. Their married life was considered extremely worth mentioning inside and outside his house. The neighboring women used to pass time by discussing the life of Muna and Govinda. They had two sons, Sanjiv and Rajiv.

Unfortunately, the conjugal life of Muna and Govinda Prasad ended in separation, as Devkota had feared of. In fact, when they were travelling on the way to Butwal, their vehicle was hit by a truck on November 5, 1998. The competent mechanical engineer's life ended in the accident on the spot called Chormara.

Muna Ghimire frequently attended the *harikirtan*, religious devotional programs with the hymns on Lord *Hari*.

She had started going there with her mother when she was just five years old. She was completely devoted to *harikirtan* ever since. Three men had played inspiring role in Muna's life - the Great Poet Devkota, Kavi Prasad Gautam and Govinda Prasad Ghimire.

The Great Poet's third son Padma Prasad Devkota was born on June 20, 1952. According to Padma Prasad Devkota, he was six years old when he joined as a fifth grader in Padmodaya High School. He was studying in class six when the great poet died in 1959.

After the demise of Devkota, Nepal Government had provided monthly scholarship of one hundred rupees. Therefore, he was enrolled in St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel. Though he was studying in class six, he started his studies from class two in St. Xavier's School. He completed Sr. Cambridge from that school. He completed his Intermediate of Science from Amrit Science College, Bachelor of Arts from Tri-Chandra College and Master of Arts in English from Tribhuvan University. He also completed his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) from Southern Illinois University of United States of America. He also completed his Diploma in French language, from 'Bishwa Bhasa Campus'. He had gone to France to take training in French language, literature, and culture. He had also gone to Spain and Germany for the same purpose. He had also travelled India and Bangladesh.

Padma Prasad Devkota was married to Sudha Paudyal in 1978. They gave birth to two sons named Prajjwal and Prashant.

Padma Prasad Devkota was involved in the teaching profession. He taught English in many colleges affiliated to Tribhuvan University. He had become Head of the Department and Campus Chief of Bishwa Bhasa Campus;

while he was working there, he had also worked as the Head of Central Department of English at Tribhuvan University. He left the service of Tribhuvan University after he became Professor. After leaving the job at the University, he desired to work again. The thought “Why not to open an organization on the name of own father?” was planted in him. He accordingly opened “The Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota Studies and Research Centre” and had taken the position of Chairperson of the organization.

Padma Prasad Devkota is considered a skilled scholar in translating Nepali into English language and vice-versa. But, he has translated few of his father’s creations. In this regard, Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav and Hari Shrestha quote that, “Padma Prasad is not to keep hand in the work not yielding him money. Despite receiving the royalty of his father’s literary works, why doesn’t he stop the business that he does in the name of his father?”

His famous translation work is ‘*Ashwasthama*’ written by Madhav Ghimire in Nepali language. He had also translated ‘A Rising Sun’ written by Lauren Hansberry into Nepali language. He has written poetic collections of ‘*Balchhari*’, ‘*Madness of a Sort*’, ‘*A Pond of Swans*’, ‘*Harishchandra*’, ‘*Down Cycle*’ along with other essays and poems.

The Great Poet’s youngest son Deepak Prasad was born on February 25, 1958 in Kathmandu. He was given education in St. Xavier’s School by the Government of Nepal after the demise of Devkota. He completed his Senior Cambridge from St. Xavier’s School and Intermediate of Science from Tri-Chandra College. Then he had gone to Moscow, Soviet Russia to study MBBS under scholarship of Soviet Russia. Afterwards, he studied Pediatrics from Dhaka University.

Deepak Prasad is known to be a sober, friendly and helpful person in the Devkota family. He started to work as Health Officer in the Ministry of Health from January 4, 1985. He also worked in Tansen Hospital of Palpa, Mental Hospital of Lalitpur, and Hetauda Hospital of Makawanpur. He then entered Kanti Children Hospital Maharajganj, as a Child Specialist. He also got promotion due to his working capacity. He resigned from that post on December 18, 2002. Then he left to work abroad. After the death of his mother, he decided to leave Nepal. Now, he is residing in New Zealand with his wife Lila.

Devkota's Beloved Friends

Great Poet Devkota was famous among all the Nepalese, and was loved by all Nepali speaking people. The intellectuals from around the world also had a liking towards Devkota. Devkota has remained famous as a star in the world of Nepalese literature and his greatness is admired unanimously. The service he has provided to the Nepalese literature renders greatness to Devkota. Devkota's creations – the literary repository of Nepalese literature – always brought his personality to light; especially, his creation Muna Madan towered him on fame giving a place in the heart of the public.

Devkota was liked, loved and revered by many people. He was associated with *Shivapuri Baba* for three months. *Baba* had great regards for him. Some individuals were seen eager to share happinesses and sorrows of Devkota's life. Some of those supporting him in his happiness, laughter, pain and tears were namely: Bhim Nidhi Tiwari, Yogi Naraharinath, Siddhicharan Shrestha, Surya Bikram Gyawali, Keshar Shumsher JBR, Gopal Pandey 'Ashim', Badrinath Bhattarai, Nara Pratap Thapa, Bishnu Mani Acharya, Dr. Pinaki Prasad Acharya, Somnath Ghimire 'Vyas', Shukra Raj Shastri, Baburam Acharya, Bhava Dev Panta, Jhapat Bahadur Rana, Subba Riddhi Bahadur Malla, Shyam Prasad Sharma, Dataram Sharma, Sundar Raj Chalise, Kulachandra Koirala, Dan Khaling, Hari Lal Shrestha,

Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, Kanchan Pudasaini, Narendra Bahadur Shah, Balaram Sramajivi and Punyaprabha Devi Dhungana and so on.

Bhim Darshan Rokka had been writing poems from the inspiration of the great poet Devkota, and he was with Devkota for a long time. Apart from these people, the ones who usually accompanied Devkota and had served him with open heart were Chandra Bahadur Shrestha, Narayan Prasad Banskota and Basanta Kumar Sarma Nepal. Devkota had received enough courage to maintain his life with the suggestion, help and goodwill of the people who were close to him. The chief personalities who had provided assistance to Devkota, and with whom Devkota too had close relations are:

• **Ananganath Paudyal**

The person who had loved Devkota from his early life till the end is Ananganath Paudyal. Paudyal had carried Devkota piggyback since his childhood, and he had always supported Devkota. Paudyal too was a poet and had knowledge of mathematics; thus, they liked one another so much. Their dedication for each other was not only due to their relationship of a teacher and a student; Paudyal was Devkota's affinal brother-in-law as well. Paudyal who taught math to Devkota was 14 years older.

Ananganath Paudyal was the creator of puritanism. Devkota had written the preface of Paudyal's narrative poem *Shree Radha Krishna Milan* in 1951. Devkota praised the creation of Paudyal with open heart. Paudyal used to write poems in the style of Lekhnath. Devkota used to be delighted by the style of writing of his brother-in-law. Paudyal used to show Devkota all the poems he wrote and would ask, "*Sahila!* How do you like my poem?" Similarly, Devkota would often

read his creations to his brother-in-law. Sharachchandra Bhattarai has written that Paudyal is 'The poet who appeared in the threshold of the end of the medieval period and beginning of the modern age.'

It was in the year 1940 when Ananganath Paudyal had a near to death experience because of cholera. Devkota had called a doctor for his brother-in-law. As directed by Dr. Bhawani Bhakta Shrestha and compounder Hari Charan Shrestha, Devkota had brought water from Bagmati River and boiled it. When it cooled down to room temperature, he gave a bottle of it as saline drip to Paudyal. The serious situation of Paudyal gradually saw the improvement and he finally had come out of the death trap. In fact, Devkota and Paudyal were a great support to each other. Whenever Devkota suffered from the mental and physical tension, he used to go to Paudyal's home. In this context, Nitya Raj Pandey had written, "The society had already guessed that Devkota had gone insane, seeing his one sided habit accompanied by his pitiable condition. Due to this situation, the poet wished to stay in the lap of nature peacefully; so, he had gone to live in his brother-in-law's house at Kumarigal, Guheshwori for around ten days." During the stay, observing the Kamini flower tree in the orchard, Devkota had written poem about the flower. Devkota had written some of his creations staying in Paudyal's house. He wanted to remain happy in the house of his sister and brother-in-law, and he regarded the couple as if like a religious holy spot. As long as he lived at Kumarigal, he wouldn't even drink water without bowing towards his sister and brother-in-law's feet.

Devkota used to reach Kumarigal whenever he wished to begin any good work. Devkota had been given the responsibility to prepare the letter of ceremonial greeting, when the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit

Jawahar Lal Nehru had come to visit Nepal. Devkota had written the letter of ceremonial greeting in Paudyal's residence. In fact, he considered Paudyal's house as an appropriate venue for his plans and programs. His sister Devendra Kumari would feel delighted to welcome people from her maternal home. She would often participate in all the pain and pleasures of her maternal home. Even the children of the Paudyal couple presented themselves with all their abilities in service to Devkota.

• **Ishwar Baral**

It was in the year 1942; Devkota was pulling his cycle with one hand and swaying his round cap in the air with his other hand. While he was walking totally absorbed in his thoughts, his bicycle fell down; and with his bicycle, he too had fallen down on the road. The person who helped him rise up was Ishwar Baral. He came to know that, the person who had fallen down was none other than Laxmi Prasad Devkota. The situation in which they first met was unusual. Then, Baral had taken Devkota to his house and offered him snacks. Afterwards, Baral began to pay visits to Devkota quite often.

During the initial meetings with Devkota, Ishwar Baral had written a description, "He is in a state of deep and continuous pain." Baral had always respected Devkota as a scholar. Baral highly praised Devkota with his writings. Back then, no one had thought of the title 'The Great Poet of Nepal' which was used by Baral for Devkota. Ishwar Baral was the first Nepalese to give the title 'The Great Poet' for Devkota from the public. He had written 'The Great Poet' for Devkota in a Nepali monthly magazine 'Udaya' published from Banaras, in the year 1947, edition of November-December. The title 'The Great Poet' for Devkota became unanimously accepted and universally honored. Earlier in 1945, Baral had

addressed Devkota as pandit in the magazine 'Udaya'; pandit was used only to address great scholars. Baral had said that Devkota's writing reminds the English poet Wordsworth, and many qualities of Devkota's writings are similar to that of the Hindi Poet Sumitranandan Pant. Baral had said this eight years earlier than the declaration of Rahul Sankrityayan on Devkota. The great pandit and scholar Rahul Sankrityayan had written about Devkota that he was the blend of the renowned poets of India 'Pant, Prasad and Nirala'. Similarly, Baral in 1945 had further said, 'It's very rare to find a mature mind as Devkota's in Nepalese literature. Our literature and country is proud to have Devkota.'

Ishwar Baral had been the main person to help Devkota in Banaras. Nepali National Congress, during that time, had left Devkota in a chaotic condition; and it was Baral who had saved Devkota. Baral had taken Devkota to a shop of Tika Dutta Dhital, it was named 'Nepali Shaubhagya Pustakalaya'. In fact, Devkota used to obey whatever Baral said. Devkota had always received and acknowledged the affection of Baral. Devkota used to receive priority even in the periodicals edited by Baral. From that moment onwards, as long as Baral lived, he kept on writing various articles shedding light on the personality and literatures of Devkota. Others called Devkota a 'lunatic', but Baral never accepted this fact. He had written on this subject as well, "Devkota had not gone mad. He was all right. He wanted to get released from the various problems of the society. Thus, he was boiling in the suffocation."

Devkota used to say that Ishwar Baral is one of the representatives of the critics of Nepalese literature. Devkota had taken the name of Baral, especially in his address in Afro-Asian Writer's Conference, organized in Tashkent, Russia.

• Kedar Man Vyathit

It was in the year 1945. Kedar Man Vyathit had gone to the Nepali Language Publishing Committee with the interest to publish his poems. One-sided discussions were being held regarding his poems in the committee; Vyathit had written in the context of the moment, "...a young lad entered. The youth had worn old and dirty *daura-suruwal* (Nepalese national dress), tennis shoes and dirtily fidgeted cap made of *dambar kumari* (a type of cloth). The young man sat on the floor near our chair after his salutation to Balkrishna Sama. I didn't like the way the youth sat on the floor. I had asked him to sit on the chair like we did. After I had forced him for quite some time, he sat on the chair in very uncomfortable manner. After that, the discussion on my poems continued again. The youth began to participate in the discussion which was in favour of my poems. Right then the youth praised my poems with respect; I was overwhelmed with joy. I had felt presence of God in the youth. After some time, Balkrishna Sama pointed to the youth and asked, "Vyathit, do you know who he is?" When I replied him in negative, Sama then said, "He is Laxmi Prasad Devkota." From that day onwards, Vyathit came gradually closer to Devkota and remained in touch.

Devkota and Kedar Man Vyathit were very close to each other. In this context, one day, they both went to visit Balaju. While they were on the way, Devkota felt hungry and he said to Vyathit, "I feel hungry, do you have one rupee to buy the peanuts?" When Vyathit stated that he too was running short of money, Devkota told the shopkeeper, "I am Nepal's poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota. I want to eat some peanuts. I am but penniless. I'd pay you later; would you give me a rupee to buy peanuts?" The shopkeeper agreed to provide Devkota with the stuff asked.

Devkota and Kedar Man Vyathit were fond of each other. Devkota used to share his heart openly with Vyathit. When Vyathit was sick, Devkota had taken money to Vyathit's house, and the money had helped Vyathit to get cured. Devkota had given the metal coins worth thirty-five rupees to Vyathit. Till late, Vyathit kept saying, "Both of us were in extreme poverty. Perhaps he had borrowed that money from somewhere."

Kedar Man Vyathit would frequently visit Devkota's house at Maitidevi. Once, Vyathit had reached Devkota's house while Devkota was lying without food. In that moment, Devkota had told Vyathit, "I am a dead person." Then, Vyathit romantically had pinched the calf of Devkota and had said, "You are not dead." In fact, Devkota had added this particular context in his poem 'The Lunatic':

*I was once prostrate
Thinking that I'm dead
One friend pinched me hard and said,
Oh, lunatic, your flesh is still not dead*

At times, The Great Poet Devkota was provided with some money by Vyathit when he suffered from the scarcity of expenses. Vyathit had provided Devkota one hundred fifty rupees from the Cultural Council each month. Not only this, Devkota had gone to Banaras before 1950 as per the request of Kedar Man Vyathit. Their contemporaries used to say, "Devkota and Vyathit are like siblings."

Devkota used to follow his role as a critic in every place he went. In this connection, Devkota had shed light on Vyathit in the huge conference of the writers in Tashkent, Russia. Devkota had said about Vyathit at Tashkent conference, "Kedar Man Vyathit is carrying out numerous experiments; he is bringing coherence in intellectuality and

sentimentality, and giving expressions to the revolutionary feelings. Experience of political struggle is reflected in his poetry.”

• **Ganesh Man Singh**

Ganesh Man Singh is the name of yet another beloved associate of the Great Poet. Mitthu Aryal, Lekhnath’s daughter and Devkota’s niece had said, “I’ve not seen anyone but Singh who had behaved so well to my uncle.” According to her, Singh had bowed on the feet of Devkota twice. The first time was, when Singh had gone to Devkota’s residence and touched his feet saying ‘My Guru’, and the second time was when Devkota had died; then immediately, Singh had gone to the funeral site, Pashupati Aaryaghat and continuously weeping, bowed on the feet of Devkota. Singh used to give money to Devkota, according to his ability, to run the household expenses of Devkota; he would go to Devkota’s house to hand over the money. According to Rabindranath Devkota, the son of Lekhnath, “Devkota trusted, loved and respected Singh from the core of his heart. Singh appeared strict from outside, but in fact, he was very soft and sensitive. Therefore, as a custom, my uncle used to reach any place Singh would ask him to come.” So much so, understanding the intention of Singh, Devkota had gone to Banaras without letting any family member know about it. Prem Lal Singh had taken Devkota to Darjeeling on March 30, 1948.

When the great Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan had come to Nepal, Devkota and Ganesh Man Singh had gone to the rented house of Bal Chandra Sharma, in Chhetrapati. Hari Saran Nepali, in this context had said, “Bal Chandra Sharma was my tenant when Rahul had come to my house. Ganesh Man Singh and Devkota also had come to my house. Then, I had come to know that Ganesh Man and Devkota would

make fun and joke as well. People thought Devkota to be very serious, but he was full of humour. I had seen that Ganesh Man had a great respect for Devkota.”

When Ganesh Man Singh was a minister, he used to reach Maitidevi field to meet the great poet. Singh often used to send his vehicle to bring Devkota in his house. Ram Hari Joshi in this context says, “I would go to take Devkota couple in Ganesh Man’s vehicle, when Ganesh Man was a minister. Singh would often invite Devkota in his residence during feasts and parties.” Singh considered Devkota as a great creator of Nepal, and Devkota considered Singh as a capable leader of Nepali soil. Devkota, in his last moments, had told Singh, “Though I would be mixed up with soil, let the new Nepal be created, let democracy grow and blossom, may it never die.” The depth of Singh’s love for Devkota was observed by Devkota’s youngest daughter during ‘baitarni daan’ ritual for her father. Ganesh Man Singh couldn’t resist sobbing, discharging saliva and snot. He was inconsolable. After the demise of Devkota, Singh had said, “The way lotus grows in the mud, and blossom above water, poet Devkota too was born in a small family, but he had tried to come out from the feudal society and accompanied the revolutionaries.”

• **Janak Lal Sharma**

Devkota used to address Janak Lal Sharma as his nephew; but they had no relationship as such in reality. The relationship of uncle and nephew between them had started from the house of Prem Kumari Gautam, Devkota’s elder sister. Devkota’s nephew Narayan Chandra Gautam and Janak Lal Sharma were close friends. Sharma used to go to visit his friend at Baneshwor. In the same house, Devkota and Janak Lal Sharma used to meet time and again. In the course of time, Sharma started addressing Devkota with the word *mama* (maternal uncle) and Devkota too started calling

him *bhanja* (nephew) with respect. Devkota and Sharma not only shared the relationship as that of ‘uncle and niece’, theirs was a relationship which was beyond that. They gradually had become real friends of pain and pleasure. Sharma supported Devkota in both his happiness and difficulties. Similarly, Sharma too wanted the support of Devkota in his every turning point of life. In this context, Devkota had written a short story regarding their relationship, “Janak Lal Sharma calls me uncle – not because of the tradition. We did not have any blood relation, but our love was as if we’ve put the heart on auction.” Corroborating this, Sharma further says, “I was not only a part of Devkota’s family, I shared a good bond with the families of his relatives and friends.”

Devkota would feel very light to share his heart with Janak Lal Sharma. That’s why, when Devkota had come home back from Ranchi, India, he had told the real state of affairs to Sharma. Devkota had told Sharma, “...I had suffered economically – it was actually a disease due to financial crisis. What would a doctor do? But even then, I stayed there in the supervision of Dr. Berkley Hill so that others need not worry about me. He diagnosed my disease and said, “Geographical mistake! The person supposed to be born in the West, has born in the East.” And in the same context of Devkota, Janak Lal Sharma had said, “Perhaps, the doctor meant to say – had Devkota been born in the West, he wouldn’t have suffered the financial crises; but, in the East, he got pounded with the financial load.” Devkota continued to open his heart to Janak Lal Sharma. In this process he had further said, “Even though the doctor kept on trying, my disease by birth did not get cured. The doctor was no exception; he too was a bit whimsical! While I was there, I had heard a rumor about him. How far was that true, he might have known it better. A meeting of International Psychologists had been held in the

chairmanship of Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Berkley Hill. Dr. Hill was one of the four scholars, reputed around the world in the field of psychology. He was very happy with the success of the meeting. Do you know what he had done there? He stood on the table of the seminar hall, and urinated in front of everyone present there. When he was asked what he had done, he had replied that he was extremely happy with the success of the meeting; and being unable to control his happiness, he urinated; to which everyone had laughed out loud.”

On January 24, 1953, the Great Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan had come to Nepal. During his stay in Nepal, Janak Lal Sharma had sponsored a party at Devkota’s residence. With the fund collected by Sharma, a grand dinner had been organized at Kavi Kunj in Maitidevi. In that program, along with the Great Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan, Great Dramatist Balkrishna Sama, and writers like Bisheshwar Prasad Koirala and Bal Chandra Sharma, and an expert of cultural field-- Janak Lal Sharma-- were present. In fact, in the very dinner, all of them praised Devkota. And, Rahul Sankrityayan also announced that Devkota alone is equal to the three poets of Hindi literature – ‘Pant, Prasad and Nirala’. These three were the poets who had made important contributions in the field of modern Hindi literature. Raising this context, Bishwa Prem Adhikari has also written, “In the poetry of Pant, Prasad and Nirala, the true love, the true religion and the patriotism and also the lively picture of the nature are presented.”

The Great Poet Devkota and Janak Lal Sharma used to meet as soon as they got some leisure time. They used to go to the Bankali Jungle, Swayambhu and as far as Chobhar in their free times. They used to return home after it was dark evening. Sometimes they used to talk about their joy

and sorrow sitting under the tree at Tundikhel. The great poet used to take his bicycle wherever he went, be it Bankali or Tundikhel.

Devkota and Janak Lal Sharma would often visit the lieutenant's restaurant in Dillibazar. Sharma was a vegetarian before 1951. Because of Devkota's excessive obstinacy, Sharma too became non-vegetarian. Until Sharma started eating meat, Devkota would tell him, "If you thought that the entire vegetarians would go to heaven, the others would go to hell, then all of us would go to hell; what would you do by going to heaven alone?" Afterwards, Sharma also started eating meat and beaten rice to his heart's content.

• **Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah**

One of the personalities liked by Devkota was His Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah. King Mahendra too had a respect for Devkota. As per the request of Devkota, King Mahendra had formed Nepal Academy. Devkota would share hours together with King Mahendra. Devkota was made the member of Advisory Council repeatedly as per Devkota's wish. King Mahendra appointed Devkota as a minister as per the recommendation of K.I. Singh, and also made him a Member of Royal Nepal Academy. Due to their intimacy, Devkota showed off at times.

Devkota and the King shared the same poetic personality, as King Mahendra continued his poetic personality with the pen name 'Poet M. B. B. Shah.' This made the King more inclined to Devkota. In this context, Padmanath Paudyal the nephew of Devkota had said, "Once, I had been like a personal secretary to my uncle. I used to take my uncle up to the gate of the King's palace. My uncle used to stay with the King for generally 3 to 4 hours, once he entered the palace. He used to recite poems for the King and

also would talk on the topics of literary creations. I used to get surprised by the closeness of King Mahendra and my uncle.”

Devkota wrote poems about King Mahendra, and also created poems about the *shreepech* (crown). Devkota translated his own poems along with some other poets’ poems into English, which were published in a Journal of *Kavya Pratisthan* (Poetry Academy) on the occasion of the coronation of King Mahendra. This marked a historical event wherein Nepalese poems were able to find a place in the international arena. That was the first time for Nepali poems to reach international level. Devkota honored King Mahendra in his writings. In fact, he was greatly impressed by King Mahendra:

*Nature’s temple of mountains
Embedding golden pinnacle
We are presenting to Mahendra
Offers from the heart
May we all dance, Oh! King
Accepting the gist of your observance*

Devkota had gone to Tashkent, Russia to participate in the literary conference. He was sent to Tashkent with the intention that involved some conspiracy. After he returned from Tashkent, the simple, honest, and gentle Devkota was trapped by the strong, crooked, and jealous conspirators as they reported King Mahendra, “Your Majesty! Devkota has become a communist after his return from Russia.” At that time, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala was the Prime Minister, Subarna Shumsher was the Deputy Prime Minister, and Bal Chandra Sharma was the Royal Nepal Academy’s Vice Chancellor. In fact, the people in between brought the distance between B. P. Koirala and Devkota. The bond that they shared was that of nail and flesh. Koirala had gone to Devkota’s

house at Maitidevi in 1951 after taking the oath of office as Home Minister. According to Ram Hari Joshi, “Devkota had become very happy when B. P. Koirala had gone to meet him the very day he had become a minister.”

The Great Poet of the nation and founder member of Royal Nepal Academy had gone to Tashkent, taking passport not from Nepal, but from India, without informing the Government of Nepal. Based on this issue, his opposition in the mean time was busy in conspiracy to defame his image. It is in this context, the King was also requested to sack Devkota from the job and punish him accordingly. King Mahendra’s action against Devkota began to take its course, which was on the basis of advice and recommendations that were identified in due process. King Mahendra also knew that it was an injustice to Devkota. Therefore, Mahendra decided to solve the charge artfully making Devkota pay a minor penalty. Therefore, when the allowance from the Academy was discontinued, King Mahendra had sent two thousand rupees to Devkota for his treatment.

Devkota gradually understood that a conspiracy was hatched against him by the famous persons of the Nepal Government as well as the Vice-Chancellor of the Nepal Academy too. After that, on the advice of Siddhicharan Shrestha, Kedar Man Vyathit and Keshav Raj Pindali, Devkota wrote a request letter to King Mahendra on Friday, May 8, 1959 as follows:

"Chairperson of the Ministerial Cabinet had told me that he'd telephone to Embassy of Nepal in Delhi. So, I had gone to take part in Tashkent without the visa and passport. I had taken along the copy of cabinet's decision with me. I had thought the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers Subarna Shumsher JBR has also informed Your

Majesty before making the decision of the Cabinet. I haven't received the monthly salary for eight months which I used to receive from the Academy."

According to Shyam Das Baishnav, King Mahendra had called the meeting of the Academy within a week of the receipt of Devkota's request letter.

The meeting of Academy used to be held at Narayanhiti Royal Palace, in the chairmanship of its Chancellor, King Mahendra. On the occasion of Academy's Annual meeting, the King had asked the Great Poet, "How's your health, Mr. Devkota? You must take care of your health." Devkota, taking his status into account didn't like to tell anything about his health. Thus, he simply neglected the King's queries about his health and said, "I had gone to Tashkent, with the permission of Deputy Prime Minister Subarna Shumsher and your Majesty's Secretary Hans Man Singh." The King listened to Devkota with interest. Devkota spoke in anger abruptly "Your Majesty! What's the reason behind stopping my allowances? What mistake have I committed? Let me know!" After this, the Vice chancellor Bal Chandra Sharma objected on Devkota's questions, and said, "His version is not correct, Your Majesty! He had gone to Tashkent without asking anyone!" After these kinds of unwanted arguments, King Mahendra immediately left the meeting hall. After that, Devkota had told the academicians gathered there, "What kind of life is this? The King didn't even listen to me. I've lived enough." In fact, the communication between the King and Devkota were leading towards tangible achievement. But, the environment had made the King angry, so he had left the meeting and entered inside his room. After a while, the King's secretary Hans Man Singh had come out from inside the room, and informed the assembly, "His Majesty has released all the salary of

Devkota, except a month's allowance as part of defying the Government." The next day, Devkota had narrated all these details to his personal assistant Kanchan Pudasaini.

The seed of conspiracy against Devkota had been planted during his journey to Banaras; because, Devkota had cursed Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Bal Chandra Sharma and other leaders of Nepali National Congress. He especially had begun to become the victim of ill consideration after he had written poems in praise of China and Mao Tse-tung. In fact, Devkota was accused of becoming a communist, and at that time, King Mahendra had to become a shield for Devkota. Therefore, Devkota had the good will towards Mahendra as long as he lived. So much so, the earlier evening of his death, Devkota had wished success of King Mahendra, which was recorded in a tape. Nepal Cultural Association has written on this topic, "Devkota had been helped by King Mahendra, when Devkota was alive and even after his death; it was King Mahendra who provided money to publish most of the unpublished writings of Devkota."

• **Madhav Ghimire**

Madhav Ghimire is one of the beloved writers of Devkota. Ghimire had learnt to smoke cigarette because he was very close to Devkota. This had gone so far that at one point of time, Madhav Ghimire too had become unable to write without smoking. Devkota used to open his heart to Madhav Ghimire as well. In this context, Devkota had told Ghimire about writing *Shakuntal* in English language, and said to him, "I feel like submitting it to Nobel Prize Committee, what do you say?"

Madhav Ghimire worked with Devkota in Nepali Language Translation Council. In that period, Devkota used to get seventy rupees per month as salary, whereas, Ghimire

used to earn twenty rupees. Devkota used to completely dedicate himself in writing. Devkota would become contemplative in no time, as soon as he sat for writing, and in the middle of his writing, he used to say Ghimire with anxiety, "I'm thirsty, Guru!" Then, Ghimire immediately used to bring water for Devkota, which he used to drink in one breath. Ghimire became familiar with the habits of Devkota. Ghimire was not just close, but very close to Devkota. Therefore, Devkota, before his demise had said, "Madhav Ghimire and Kanchan Pudasaini would correct and publish all my unpublished writings."

Devkota and Madhav Ghimire used to roam around together in different places of Kathmandu. Ghimire would often visit Devkota's residence and Devkota too used to reach Ghimire's rented room quite often. Due to their closeness, Devkota once told Ghimire, "I had left my culture and I sunk. I have a pit, here, charmed by a demon. What would I do if this demon would swallow my children? Fifteen years after Devkota had said these words to Ghimire, he saw cancer on Devkota, exactly on the same place pointed by Devkota.

Devkota had talked about Madhav Ghimire who had accompanied him everywhere in Tashkent, Russia. Devkota used to introduce Ghimire as 'our best poet' to everyone. In the special conference of writers in Tashkent, Devkota had praised Ghimire, "Newly emerging poet Madhav Ghimire has raised voice in favour of ancient verses of Sanskrit. He expresses deep emotions reminding the native hills and surroundings in very simple language of communication, and describes the beauty of country's nature. He represents a personality with impressed romantic trend in writings, and is struggling against the trend which is opposing the romanticism, which has attracted many litterateurs."

Devkota and Madhav Ghimire had visited foreign countries too. In Devkota's initiation, he had gone to Tashkent, taking the visa from India. Thereafter, both of them had to face the penalty after returning to Nepal. In this subject, Madhav Ghimire has said, "That incident was a preplanned conspiracy against Devkota, which we came to know afterwards." In this context, he has further said, "If a great personality appeared, everybody would start chasing him. Everyone would have jealousy and envy against the great personality."

Regarding their visit to Tashkent and monthly salary from Royal Nepal Academy, Ghimire said, "In the due process, Devkota's eight months' salary was suspended. During that period, I used to give half of my monthly salary to Devkota and used to keep the rest for myself. After some time, the king released Devkota's salary of seven months; whereas, in the same pretext of violating discipline, my half months' salary was deducted. After receiving the salary, Devkota had returned at once all the money he had taken from me."

• **Mrigendra Shumsher and Bramha Shumsher**

Among the people who had loved Devkota were the brothers duo Mrigendra Shumsher and Bramha Shumsher JBR. They used to praise the educational qualifications of Devkota. Hence, as soon as Devkota returned from Patna after completion of his studies of Bachelor of Law, Babar Shumsher delivered the order of letting Devkota to enter his palace 'Babar Mahal' as a tutor to teach his grand children. In addition to that, Babar Shumsher indirectly restricted government services to Devkota with the idea of making his grand children's future bright. Babar Shumsher's sons showed affection and attachments to Devkota. Mrigendra Shumsher and Brahma

Shumsher proved to be an example of how kind hearted the blood of *Rana* regime could be. These two brothers Mrigendra and Bramha had done memorable works for Devkota. In fact, Devkota was attached to their cordiality all his life. *Rana* brothers had given heart and soul including money to Devkota. During Devkota's hard times, the two *Rana* brothers had provided him with the expenses; made the arrangements to take him to Ranchi. They had sent money in Ranchi's Nursing Home.

Devkota used to receive monthly one hundred rupees from Babar Mahal. He taught the children of Mrigendra Shumsher and Bramha Shumsher named Shanti Maiya, Bharat Shumsher, Gauri Maiya at Babar Mahal for around three years. Mrigendra Shumsher and Bramha Shumsher had a great respect for the Great Poet Devkota. They had written letters to Devkota as soon as he had reached Ranchi. They were first ever Nepali to write letters to a person who was declared as accused and insane. These dignified people, who had money, wealth and respect in the society kept on writing to Devkota who was in a mental asylum for treatment. Brahma Shamsher had helped to publish Devkota's Muna Madan and some other writings. Devkota, too, on the other hand, had always rejoiced them. It was Devkota's natural quality of reverence for the one who loved, helped and respected him.

• **Ram Hari Joshi**

The relation between Devkota and writer Ram Hari Joshi was established during Devkota's visit in Kolkata. Devkota had gone to Kolkata in 1948 on Joshi's invitation. Joshi was the Minister of Literature of 'Himanchal Student Union', which was the organization of Nepali students studying in Kolkata University.

‘Himanchal student Union’ honored Devkota amidst a grand ceremony on January 16, 1949. The ‘Mahabodhi Society Hall’ was full with audience, and Devkota was delivering his speech in Nepali language. Devkota used to recite poems in English in between his speech, taking reference of poems of Nepali language. The flavor of his speech was accepted by the literary figures and students of Bengali and Hindi language. Therefore, after two days, ‘Bangiya Hindi Parishad’ also had organized program to honor him in that very Hall. ‘Himanchal Students’ union’ had given him six hundred rupees in the commemoration.

Devkota had worn white *dhoti* and *kogati*, and yellowish brown colored *kurta* in the honoring function. In the very context, the Minister of Literature, Ram Hari Joshi said, “Devkota’s physical appearance was very attractive, and his presence there in a unique dress had made the programs even more attractive. Ram Hari Joshi also knew that Devkota had planned to make the Nepali language even broader. He used to tell Joshi, “Have you come *coated*?” The meaning of which was “Are you coming on coat?” Joshi has a view on this subject, “Devkota also wanted to popularize this sort of summarized version of language.”

Once, Devkota and Ram Hari Joshi were waiting for the tram. While they were waiting, they saw a scene of shooting gunfires. People turned into a crowd and there was chaos. They even saw people falling on the road amid the shooting. Devkota and Ram Hari Joshi got separated in the crowd. Joshi looked for Devkota here and there, but couldn’t find him. He returned to hostel frustrated. Upon reaching his hostel room, Joshi found Devkota waiting inside the room. Joshi told Devkota, “Guru! You used to say, ‘I want to die’ but you have a great wish to live!”

Ram Hari Joshi, Devendra Raj Upadhyaya and Jaya Narayan Giri used to accompany Devkota in his visit around the city of Kolkata. According to Joshi, Devkota used to rub mustard oil on his hands and used to put it on his hair and even on face. He used to apply cream on his face and used to say, “I don’t think I look skinny, now; I want to look young.”

In Kolkata, Ram Hari Joshi had served Devkota a lot. Joshi never failed to serve meat to Devkota. In that context, Joshi had said, “If lentil, vegetable and meat would be served to Devkota, he would continuously eat meat only.” I would advise him, “Guru! Have some lentil and vegetable as well!” He was headstrong. As I had experienced, his body and heart were divided in complete opposite sides. He, at times, would be gloomy and at other times would cry, and would often sit pulling his hair. Actually, I had seen Devkota first time in those conditions. In the beginning, I used to get surprised by Devkota’s behavior.”

When Devkota was in Kolkata, Ram Hari Joshi used to offer him *bidi* (tobacco) time and again. But he was a student with limited financial source. Therefore, he couldn’t fulfill Devkota’s addiction to smoking. Remembering the incident of that time, Joshi says, “We could not provide Devkota the cigarettes and *bidi* as much as he smoked, because he used to smoke one bundle of *bidi* within an hour. As we could not offer cigarettes and *bidi* to Devkota as per his demand, Devkota used to say to Ganesh Man Singh “My Lord! May I smoke a *bidi!*” Devkota used to repeat this statement every moment. At that time, Ganesh Man Singh also used to stay with us in Kolkata.

Devkota stayed at Kolkata for a month. Then he went back to Banaras. When he had a near to death experience in

Banaras, he returned to his motherland. After that, when Ram Hari Joshi was in Nepal, he regularly used to go to Maitidevi to meet Devkota. When Devkota saw Joshi, at first he danced, with pleasure. Whenever Joshi used to go to meet Devkota, he used to carry cigarettes in his hand.

In 1952, a grand program was held under the joint efforts of Nepalese Students' Union and Himanchal Student's Union in the active participation of Ram Hari Joshi. To make the program a success, Joshi and his colleagues requested King Tribhuvan for some financial support. According to their demand, King Tribhuvan provided them with five thousand rupees and also his own aeroplane to bring students from Patna to Kathmandu for ten flights. The name of that aeroplane was VT-CVC. According to Joshi, the King was given the aeroplane as a present by India after the establishment of democracy in Nepal.

According to the aforesaid program, a grand student meeting was held under a tree at Tundikhel in Kathmandu. According to the desire of Ram Hari Joshi, Devkota was the chairperson of the ceremony. Student from Nepal, India, Malaysia and Burma had participated in the seminar.

Ram Hari Joshi met Devkota regularly in Kathmandu. Once, when Joshi was in Devkota's home, he was having his food. At that time, Joshi directly went into the kitchen. Upon seeing Joshi, Devkota asked him to have meal with him and Joshi also agreed to it. But, when they were eating and talking with each other, accidentally Joshi's hand touched Devkota. And Devkota winked to gesture Joshi not to touch him. But Devkota's wife was watching the event. Mana Devi got furious by the incident. She did not eat that day, thinking that her kitchen was touched by a 'Newar'. Devkota told Joshi about it the next day.

Devkota had learnt in Kolkata that Ram Hari Joshi was a poet as well. Therefore, he was close to Joshi. On January 20, 1949, Devkota had written the preface to the anthology of poems entitled *Jhankar* written by Joshi. Joshi's *Jhankar* was published in 1957 with only one-sixth part of Devkota's original preface.

When Ganesh Man Singh was a minister, Ram Hari Joshi told him, "General Mahabir Shumsher is rich. He has a personal aircraft in India and his company has earned great fame in carrying the travellers. One or two hundred thousand rupees is not a great amount for him. He respects you and listens to you. Therefore, let us request him to open a good printing press for Devkota. In that case, it would be easy to publish the party materials and it would also provide Devkota work and livelihood. All his books could be published here." But Joshi's request was not materialized. In this context, Joshi said, "We did not recognize a multi-dimensional man like Devkota, nor could anyone make use of his talents when he was alive."

• **Lekhnath Paudyal & Balkrishna Sama**

Kavishiromani (Poet Laureate) Lekhnath Paudyal and the great dramatist Balkrishna Sama had a great influence on the literary life of Devkota. Devkota would always honour and respect these two great literary personalities throughout his life. Paudyal, Sama and Devkota did not wish to be separated from each other. Therefore *sudhapa* (Surya Bikram Gyawali, Dharanidhar Koirala and Parasmani Pradhan) had given them the title of *trimurti*. The three personalities were established as the never parting symbol of the Nepalese literature.

Devkota considered Lekhnath Paudyal as his favorite teacher. Devkota further added, "We see Lekhnath Paudyal

as the modern incomparable great poet and a great man.” Before Lekhnath Paudyal was declared a distinguished poet by the nation, Devkota used to refer Paudyal as Great Poet and Poet-Laureate. Devkota spoke about him in Tashkent also, “Lekhnath Paudyal represents the modern Nepalese literature.”

Devkota accepted Balkrishna Sama as a leading personality of drama. He always regarded Sama as an intellectual scholar. Devkota had said about Sama, “We consider Balkrishna Shumsher a pioneer of Nepali drama who has attained a great height.” Sama and Paudyal kept on providing unlimited sympathy, inspiration and affection to Devkota. Therefore, he was always in close intimacy with these two personalities all his life. Devkota used to accept *kavishiromani* (the poet of the poets) as the ‘heart’ of writing and the *natyasamrat* (the great playwright) as the ‘brain’ of it. Devkota used to obey Sama and Paudyal. As a respect, Devkota used to touch the feet of Lekhnath Paudyal and also used to show his respect with humble *namaskar* (Nepali greeting gesture holding the palms together) to Balkrishna Sama.

Lekhnath Paudyal was not nominated in the Nepal Academy formed under the chancellorship of King Mahendra. Education Minister Bal Chandra Sharma had forcefully omitted the name of Paudyal from the nomination list raising the question that, “Lekhnath has no educational qualification, what’d be his status on such a prestigious Nepal Academy?” Bal Chandra Sharma used to see Lekhnath Paudyal as uneducated and an unqualified. But Devkota immediately sent a message to the King Mahendra saying “If that sage-like writer can’t be accommodated in the Academy, I would also not step in into the Academy.” And

the very next day *kavishiromani* Paudyal was nominated a member of the academy.

Balkrishna Sama was also very close to Devkota. Devkota used to read to Sama the things he had written. It was in fact Sama who used to advise Devkota, particularly, to revise and upgrade his writings and literary creations. Devkota also used to take the advice of Sama as worthy to follow. Devkota, while in Tashkent, also said about Sama. “Playwright and Painter Balkrishna Sama is well-influenced by the poetic plays of Shakespeare.”

Devkota wrote about Lekhnath Paudyal and Balkrishna Sama. “Lekhnath Paudyal is our *kuber*, a personality rich in knowledge and so is Balkrishna Sama. Both are the brave sailors of Nepal. They spread light from the experiences of new places searching them in a far journey, finding them and bringing the news from many treasure islands. Nepal is getting wider and larger because of them; they are extending our boundaries, are winning new colonies and they are giving birth to the amazing scenes of life and newer Nepali villages and characters of the plays.

• **Shyam Das Baishnav**

It was very cold on January 8, 1947 when Kathmandu received a heavy snowfall. But, Devkota had a very important assignment in that particular day. So, Devkota along with Shyam Das Baishnav went to the residence of the Director General of the Education Department, Bijay Shumsher Rana in Maharajgunj on foot. It was very cold and thus *Rana* did not meet them. From there, they returned to Devkota’s home shivering in the cold. It took Devkota and Baishnav almost two hours to go to Maharajganj and then get back to Dillibazar on foot.

On that cold day, both Devkota and Shyam Das Baishnav were in Devkota's room and were keeping themselves warm near the fire. The fire pot was on the sleeping-mattress. If one looked outside of the window, one could see peach-flower-like snowflakes falling from the sky. When both of them looked on the ground, there was pile of cotton-like snow heaped in the courtyard. By then, the firepot had already charred Devkota's sleeping mattress.

Devkota, feeling the moment of snow fall as very cold, said to his wife Mana Devi "*Aey, bajai!* I'm feeling cold, I want to eat meat." Mana Devi could not deny her husband's request and she gave them the money to buy the meat. Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav also showed the energy as that of youth and stepping on the snow he went to Dillibazar. Baishnav, then, bought a goat's head with ten rupees given by Mana Devi and was back home.

Devkota felt the day so cold that he covered himself with the quilt after having goat's meat. And, Baishnav got to his home. As a routine, early next morning, Baishnav again reached Devkota's house to meet him. Upon seeing Baishnav, Devkota had said, "Shyam! The curry of the head of the goat made me write *Tushar Barnan*." Then Devkota read out that epic to Baishnav.

Baishnav came in contact with Devkota since 1941. "I like your handwriting. I wanted a person to copy my writings." Devkota had proposed after seeing Baishnav's handwriting "I will copy! I also want to write poems. I'd also know something in your company," an elated Baishnav had replied to Devkota.

After Devkota got a job at the Nepali Language Translation Council, he took Shyam Das Baishnav with him to work there as his assistant. Baishnav was ranked as pandit

with the insistence of Devkota. The monthly income of Devkota and Baishnav were seventy and fifteen rupees respectively. Both of them used to go to office together and come back. When Devkota used to receive his salary, Baishnav used to carry the money to Devkota's house. At that time, rupees seventy tallied seventy metal coins, and each coin used to be of one *tola*, thereby making total of seventy *tolas*. Devkota didn't trust anyone else in money-matters and would request Baishnav for his help on the day he received his salary. On that particular day of receiving the salary, he used to go to the market asking the price of the fruits and sweetmeats and he would buy them. One would often find Baishnav accompanying and supporting him. Whatever Devkota said, it would act like the red seal for Baishnav. Baishnav didn't like to hear anyone saying anything against Devkota.

“Your writing style is old,” one day Gopal Prasad Rimal uttered a critical comment on Devkota. Shyam Das Baishnav was nearby at that time. Unable to tolerate Rimal's criticism on Devkota, Baishnav had told Rimal. “If you dare, write something better than Devkota.” Though Baishnav's anger ran loose, Devkota kept quiet with a slight smile. “If Shyam challenges me I'd also write,” Rimal had replied. According to Baishnav, Gopal Prasad Rimal wrote *Masaan* after that incident.

Once, during Laxmi Puja, Devkota played dice with friends. He lost. He played again keeping his pen as a bet. This incident had affected Shyam Das Baishnav. Therefore while delivering a speech in a program, Baishnav said, “When Devkota put his pen on bet, I cried.” In response to that, Devkota reacted, “Why did Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav defame me today?” Devkota was the chief guest of the

program. He poured his heart out while speaking at the program.

Shyam Das Baishnav used to be familiar with almost everything that used to be in Devkota's inner heart. Indeed, Baishnav was Devkota's *Ganesh*, as a helper. Baishnav used to rewrite and finalize Devkota's writings before taking them to the press. Not only that, Baishnav used to be at the forefront to help Devkota in his domestic chores and also to support him in his literary works.

One day, the Great Poet Devkota said to Shyam Das Baishnav upon reaching the lieutenant's hotel, "Shyam! The King was provoked against me by somebody. My visit to Russia caused the King to order to curtail my monthly remuneration. The King didn't hear my saying. My life doesn't come to a halt. I have lived long." And, at that time, Baishnav told Devkota, "Don't worry. I'd do the work of raising all your works. After all you're a talented person. The King will also realize this fact one day. King Mahendra himself isn't like that; he was also misguided by the politicians and the Vice-Chancellor of the Academy." After listening to Baishnav, Devkota again said, "I also feel like that, Shyam!" Actually, it was the last dialogue between Devkota and Baishnav, which was an expression of pain and dissatisfaction.

Devkota always loved Shyam Das Baishnav. When Devkota was ill, he translated Baishnav's anthology of poems entitled *Upahar* into the English language. Baishnav used to read out his own poems in Nepali, and Devkota immediately used to translate them into English. Devkota gave the work the title, *The Present*. Not only that, Devkota also expressed his view on the anthology of poems entitled *The Tears of a Night* written by Baishnav, "I had brought Baishnav in the

field of poetry. Later on, he tried to excel me and I was very pleased. The teacher stayed raw sugar and the student became fine sugar.” Devkota and Baishnav weren’t always as officer and the assistant, but they used to be like close friends. In this regard, pandit Badri Nath Bhattarai would often say, “Shyam Das Baishnav used to walk with Devkota as his shadow.” Devkota and Baishnav were connected at the heart. Devkota had mentioned with pride at the Literary Seminar held in Tashkent that Shyam Das Baishnav was one of the emerging writers of the young generation in the field of Nepalese literature.

• **Hari Shrestha**

Devkota had close relationship with Hari Shrestha since 1951. Shrestha always bowed towards Devkota not only because of his writings alone, but because of Devkota’s liberal vision, open heart and humanity. Devkota was also inspired by his hard work, dedication and faith. Therefore, they were close to each other. Not only that, their hearts were open to each other because of the friendship between Hari Shrestha and Devkota’s younger brother Madhusudan.

Devkota had told Hari Shrestha one day, “I wish to have a settlement of the writers in Chitwan.” But Devkota failed in that work. Concerned official of that time Krishna Bam Malla had said, “Here, there is the need of the spade-cultivation more than the need of the pen.” According to Shrestha, Devkota wanted to organize all the writers in one place than to live a lonely life.

Whenever Hari Shrestha was at Devkota’s home, he would often find him worried. The despair of Devkota then was centered at the financial condition of his house, the education and upbringing of his children and the behavior of his wife. Therefore, he would be lost in his own world.

During the last days of his life at the guest house of the Pashupatinath, Devkota told Hari Shrestha, “I am doing a research on what happens after death, I will come to tell you in your dream.” Devkota said the same thing to his younger brothers at that time.

Devkota would open his heart out to Hari Shrestha. When he lay in the death bed, he remembered Hari Shrestha several times. During that time, Devkota wrote a letter to Hari Shrestha :

August 20, 1959

Dear Hari Shrestha,

The huge figure of death has already appeared in front of me. Now I'm taking the artificial body. I want to touch the galaxy of stars in the sky. I can't. I couldn't give peace to myself. If I could get up, I could've committed suicide. I don't want to give burden and worries to this world. Though others called me the intellectual, I'm a fool for myself; I became blind. I want to side towards light, but darkness beckons me. I can't tolerate this unbearable pain. If somebody can get me 'Potassium Cyanide', I'd have considered him the true friend of my life. I'm a guilty person, therefore I want to wash away the guilt; if somebody could, I want to wash the names of my publications also. I want to vanish, like a drop of water in the desert. Now, no one needs to know me.

A Friend

Laxmi Prasad Devkota

After receiving Devkota's letter, Hari Shrestha went to the Shanta Bhawan Hospital (now Patan Hospital) in

Lalitpur. At that time, Devkota's face looked bony. Immediately after meeting him, Devkota had said, "Mr. Shrestha! I've heard that there is a hospital near your house; may be you know the doctors well. Please bring me four grains of 'Morphine' or 'Potassium Cyanide' from somewhere. I'd consider you the true friend of life and I'd always remember your help."

Hari Shrestha came to know at nine o'clock at night that Devkota was taken to the Dharmasala, guest house of the Aryaghat. At that time, Shrestha was working in the Radio Nepal. And Shrestha walked on foot from Singha Durbar to Aryaghat. Unable to speak clearly with Hari Shrestha, Devkota had uttered a few words which Shrestha had written in his diary, "I want to touch the bright stars of the sky. I couldn't. I'm called by the darkness; somebody is tearing my body into pieces. My skin is getting torn."

Devkota wrote poems even during his last days at Shanta Bhawan Hospital. He gave Hari Shrestha a poem written by him at that time. The poem which was written in Nepali was the last creation in his journey of writing:

*The world was like the night
The fire in me wasn't kindled until I was alive.
After all, the Lord Krishna is the one and only
I lacked devotion, knowledge nor did I realize it.*

Devkota's Affection towards Women

Devkota had a great respect for his mother. He offered his help to his mother from his childhood. He was an obedient child as he used to follow his mother's instructions sincerely. He obeyed his mother all his life. He learned English language because of his mother's encouragement. He considered his mother as a goddess. He used to greet his sisters by bowing his head to their feet. In fact, he had a great respect for women. He wrote poems by the inspiration of his elder sister-in-law, Som Kumari.

Devkota was a feminist. He always had a cordial respect for his sister-in-laws. It was not hidden that he considered his elder sister-in-law as mother. His elder sister-in-law gave birth to a female baby, but, the child passed away when she was 18 months old. Then after, Som Kumari didn't give birth to any other child. She had suffered from asthma. Lekhnath Devkota married Indra Kumari as his second wife with a view to continue his generation. This incident drenched Devkota in tears. He used to console his sister-in-law, "Don't you panic, I won't let you in pain; please consider me as your own child."

Devkota's both sisters-in-law had friendly relation with each other. Devkota had soft corner for his eldest sister-in-law. The two sisters-in-laws were attached to each other. They

shared a bond like that of stone and soil. Therefore, Devkota was equally devoted to both of them. Not only this, Devkota looked after the children born to Indra Kumari. Devkota used to get drenched in the affection of especially the women in pain and struggle. For example, his elder brother Lekhnath Devkota's elder daughter Mitthu Devi was married to Gunanath Aryal, a resident of Pyukha, Kathmandu. In the very next year of their conjugal life, Gunanath happened to lose his mental balance. This incident made Devkota cry a lot and he told his elder brother with a painful heart, "Brother, why did you get your daughter married to a man that you had no prior information? Isn't Mitthu's life completely destroyed now?" Devkota was pained to see his niece sad. Devkota cared, loved and was sympathetic to Mitthu as long as he lived.

Devkota had a great respect for women and he always showed regards to them. He worshiped the female folk. He considered women as the most beautiful flower on earth. He used to compare the civilization with women. In this context, he wrote, "Civilization depends on the respect towards women. There is no other sin than torturing women."

Devkota took great interest in the subject of men and women. He had also written about his experiences. According to his writing, "There is nothing greater in the world, than the superior, excited and useful sexual compatibility of men and women. In fact, Devkota had created a lot of writings being completely engrossed in women.

Devkota was married in his early youth. He nurtured in the love of his wife. His wife was bright, tender and exceptionally beautiful. He loved Mana Devi a lot. Therefore, he had written Muna Madan expressing the value of conjugal love. Even in the intimate moments with his wife, he wouldn't

think of any other woman as beautiful and gentle as his wife. When he was home, he wouldn't let his wife stay away from him even for a while. He wouldn't think of any other woman as beautiful and gentle as his wife. His wife Mana Devi had to comb his hair and help him dress up every day. Mana Devi used to polish his shoes, and even help him wear socks and shoes.

Mana Devi had to see off Devkota every time he left the house. Mana Devi had to walk ahead of him till the main gate of their house, and then only, Devkota would consider the time as appropriate to leave the house. As long as he was conscious, he remained a worshipper of love of his wife. Every day, when he was to leave his house, and get separated from his wife, he stared in the eyes of his wife. He at times would even forget to leave in time. So his wife forcefully would farewell him. In fact, Devkota would never get tired of looking at his wife's face. In this regard, Nitya Raj Pandey had written-- Devkota would move forward his steps to work only after Mana Devi would enter the house saying, "Okay! Please leave now, I'm closing the door."

Devkota, before leaving the home, used to embrace Mana Devi, and kiss her up to satisfaction. In fact, in those days Mana Devi was his world of love. Muna, the youngest daughter of Devkota couple, in this context had said, "I had seen my father kissing on the cheeks of my mother many times, before he left the house for work. My father used to kiss my mother on her cheeks as soon as he would enter the house. I had never seen the kind of love, my parents had for each other."

Devkota respected his wife. He considered his wife as somebody having an understanding about all his creations. Therefore, Mana Devi used to be the first reader of Devkota's

writings. She used to suggest Devkota for the possible correction of the poems written with the feelings of extreme emotions. Devkota's wife would too get delighted by hearing the poems written by her husband. Mana Devi had heard Muna Madan from Devkota, dozens of times.

Devkota felt a strong thunder in his heart, mind and eyes led by hymn chants set by Kavi Prasad Gautam. After that, he at times became irritated with his wife, and at other times, he used to be close to her. There would also be a time when he was against his wife, and at other times he used to show love to her. People stigmatized Mana Devi Devkota in different ways. This had tortured Devkota like death punishment.

Often, it was hard to find someone who would not gossip about Devkota's wife Mana Devi. Many were envious with the beauty of Mana Devi. Some of them were worried about the matter that Mana Devi did not love Devkota. And, some wanted to destroy Devkota's family life. Mana Devi alone was the evidence of the truth and falsehood of these matters. Whatever the reality had been, Taranath Sharma too supporting them, penned down, "... and recently, poet's wife had been nourishing the religious vagabond, by hiding the hard earned silver coins inside the earthen pot wherein milk is coagulated into curds. Poet's heart was sad from this matter and his head simmered."

Balkrishna Sama too, standing on the same ground, had given his verdict, "It's true that Devkota had found the coins from inside the earthen pot that had been used to put the curd which his wife was about to take to Kavi Prasad." In this context, the son of Devkota couple, Padma Prasad Devkota had said, "So what? Is that the money that caused the poverty enter our house?" In fact, 'Mana Devi', 'coins in

earthen pot' and 'Kavi Prasad Gautam' were the hot topics of conversation in the intellectual and family circles.

According to some people who had heard and seen the matters, *Harikirtan*, the religious group led by Kavi Prasad, had ruined a lot of families. Women had such a craze in *Harikirtan* that they used to leave all the important household works to participate in *Harikirtan*. The women didn't take care of their husbands and their daily routine works. *Harikirtan* was more important for them than their home and husband and family. *Harikirtan* was their dream and it was their reality. Devkota's wife Mana Devi had joined *Harikirtan*, one year after Devkota got separated from his brothers and started residing in Maitidevi. After that, her daily routine was associated with *Harikirtan* as long as she lived.

Devkota's dysfunctional family life was a bitter fact for his family members. To strengthen the family, Devkota's elder brother Lekhnath Devkota too had tried his best. In this context, he once had tried to counsel Devkota, "Brother, your family life is not going to work with this woman; why don't you get remarried? Your family life would go smoothly." But, Devkota did not want to plant thorns in the heart of his wife, though he had a great respect for his brother. He couldn't leave his wife nor separate from her. No matter what people accused and said about his wife, Mana Devi was his heartbeat.

Devkota loved his wife from the core of his heart. But, people used to incite him against his wife, and at times he would find it difficult to continue his devotion for his wife. Therefore, his mind sometimes used to be disturbed with this reality. Consequently, the internal conflict between the feelings of husband and wife enunciated gradually. Devkota, therefore, had even wandered for second marriage. He had requested his sister Lok Priya Devi to search a girl for him.

According to Kamal Dixit, Devkota had told his sister, “Sister, please ask your niece for me, I would marry her.” Then, Lok Priya Devi had told Bidhya Devi, mother of Kamal Dixit, “My brother had asked for your daughter ‘Mitthu’, would you let him marry her?” Kamal Dixit in this regard, further said, “My mother had bitter experience of her mothers-in-law’s sufferings due to ‘second wife’; so, she had replied, “No, I won’t let my daughter marry as a second wife.” After that, the whole scenario had come to an end.

Lok Priya Devi couldn’t get the girl of her choice to marry her brother Devkota; so, she convinced her brother not to marry again. At her persuasion, Devkota would control his wife; he would control his emotions, and agree on not to bring the second wife. Then, he was gradually faithful towards his wife.

“Devkota’s wife is one of the beloved of Kavi Prasad Gautam”, Devkota tolerated this controversy too. Devkota had seen and heard about some of the incidents regarding this topic, and some were just the imagination of Devkota. This rumor had buzzed in many places in those days. The rumor was the mixture of reality and falsehood. Because, on one hand, Devkota was whimsical, but he still loved his wife. On the other hand, Mana Devi was devoted to *Harikirtan* from the core of her heart. *Harikirtan* was the religious oblation of Kavi Prasad Gautam. *Harikirtan* had brought Mana Devi closer to Gautam.

Kavi Prasad Gautam was a pandit who made other’s wife massage his feet, bow down to his feet and made them drink the water used for rinsing his feet. He used to make women who used to come under his shelter, to take his left over food. In this context, Devkota’s niece Kamala Uprety, daughter of Devendra Kumari has said, “Once, there was a

'Pooja' of *Harikirtan* worshiping ceremony at my uncle's house. My aunt had invited Kavi Prasad Gautam as well. After the worship was over, my aunt had taken Gautam in the kitchen to have food. The food left over by Gautam was taken as the blessings from him and the female disciples snatched it in a sudden rush and ate it. That day my uncle (Devkota) repeatedly was asking my aunt, "*Bajai*, I'm in a hurry to go out, please give me food!" But my aunt was completely devoted in the service of Kavi Prasad Gautam. Finally, my uncle, tired of repeatedly asking for food, left home hungry without eating anything."

The matter related to Mana Devi had been the talk of the town for quite some time. The discussion about Mana Devi was both mendacious and true; but some of them were carried out just to degrade and ruin her and malign her character. Whether Mana Devi did right or wrong, some of the people, who considered themselves as the so-called moral leaders of the society, did cross the boundary and peeped into her matters. Shreehari Phuyal had captured the tragic and factual details of that moment, in these words:

Wasting the surge of money in 'Hare Ram' Party
Playing Holi (festival of color) in the sweat of husband
Delish red is – Mana Devi
Observed in artificial devotion – Mana Devi

Devkota, however, didn't care about the rumors regarding Mana Devi. He didn't want to break his wife's heart. Therefore, he did not let wither his wife's desire either. Thus, he used to encourage his wife to go to Kavi Prasad Gautam to listen to his hymns. Regarding this, the youngest daughter of Devkota couple, Muna Ghimire, had said-- My father, even when he was in Shanta Bhawan Hospital, had told my mother, "*Bajai*, no matter what one says, don't stop going to the hymns of Kavi Prasad."

The rumors regarding Mana Devi, attaching her name with Kavi Prasad Gautam, did not stop coming in the public. It is in this context that Devkota family had been worried as well. Sabitri Regmi, the eldest daughter of Devkota, in this regard said, “False and untrue things too have been written about my mother in books. Is there anyone who haven’t been to *Harikirtan*? We all have gone there. My mother-in-law and other aunties too had visited there. We particularly liked that religion.”

Devkota beaten in fury and fear of defeat grew a detest against the hymn chants. It was in love or in irony, he appreciated Kavi Prasad Gautam in his wife’s presence. In the words of Devkota’s pupil Dhanamani Acharya, Kavi Prasad Gautam’s step at the door would freeze Devkota. He would rush and hide all the musical instruments at the former’s arrival.

No doubt, Devkota was fed up with his wife’s whims after hymns. He had observed how Gautam’s *kirtan* led the females in affairs resulting into the fuss in the households. “The one who can utter the word *Ram* in a low humble voice and sense it, is a true devotee of the lord, I reckon,” said Devkota to his student Pushpa Nepali, “...those quarreling with husband, wifely extravagant, insane lady throwing their dresses and the mothers who kill own babies to those hypocrite hymn-makers, in my view, are mechanic, ill ordained and are demonic.”

Nepali society showed more interest in Mana Devi than necessary. Kavi Prasad Gautam had created a rift between the Devkota couple. Gautam had time and again been a topic of discussion among the poets. Ambika Devi Rimal, the second daughter of Devkota, protested against the mendacious talks of the society, and said, “A wife should be

like my mother. It's my mother, who actually made my father 'Devkota'. It was my mother's sacrifice and penance that made my father a 'great' person. My mother was really great to have tolerated the kind of impractical person like my father." Similarly, Devkota's youngest daughter Muna Ghimire too advocated her mother, "Many fabricated false stories had come in the media about my mother. I want to slap those people for writing nonsense which never took place. I have never seen the kind of love that existed between my parents as compared to any other parents." Devkota's son Padma Prasad Devkota, in this context had said, "My mother had served my father a lot. My mother had looked after Devkota, the household and children. People, after the death of my father presented themselves as myths. Especially there were many narrations against my mother. I consider them senseless. My mother was hurt to hear such false stories."

Mana Devi had struggled a lot to manage the household affairs. She followed the religion of her choice and was responsible towards Devkota. Despite this, she couldn't take the sigh of relief as long as she lived. After she got married, neither she got any financial comfort, nor the family pleasure. Even the educated people did not refrain from chasing her. Especially, when Devkota got separated from his brothers and came to Maitidevi, she had to walk stepping on the thorns every moment. In fact, on the early morning of the last day of his life, Devkota had even said, "Now, my wife is left alone." There was none to advocate for Mana Devi after that. After her husband's demise, Mana Devi had to hear the harsh words against her. Mana Devi Devkota departed this planet on February 18, 2000.

Kavi Prasad Gautam was a learned person as well. The rich and respected family's wives used to gather at *Hari Kunja*, and the crowd seemed that of a festival. Prime

Minister Juddha Shamsher JBR had heard that Gautam had been ruining the wives and daughters-in-law of noble class. He, therefore, had ordered to make Gautam stand naked in front of him and asked the police to thrash him with stick. Gautam used to cry *Ram Ram*, every time he got the stick on his body. Devkota's nephew Komal Nath Paudyal said that after hearing *Ram Ram* from Kavi Prasad Gautam, the *Rana* ordered to stop beating him, because, the *Rana* too was a devotee of God Ram. In this way, Gautam had saved himself by uttering the holy word.

Kavi Prasad was considered as the symbol of God by many women. Some of them considered him as the incarnation of Lord Krishna. The eldest daughter of the Devkota couple, Sabitri Regmi had said, "Kavi Prasad Guru was the real incarnate of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu." According to Muna, the youngest daughter of Devkota, "Kavi Prasad Gautam was wealthy but he did not keep his property with himself. In fact, he had distributed his ancestral property to others. He was extremely against the tradition of sacrificing animals in worship. He used to lie on the block of wood used for sacrificing the animals, protesting the violence in worshipping God. He was able to stop the ritual of sacrificing animals in Gautam clan."

Devkota was sexually aroused right from his school life. According to Chooda Mani Bandhu, he used to talk excitedly with his school friend Phanindra Prashad Lohani continuously about the subject of sex and love. But, his attraction towards girls used to be an example of gentlemanliness. Even in his vulnerable sexuality, there was the presence of some artistic beauty.

There were no girls studying in Patna University when Devkota was studying there. He studied in a college, without

any female student in Patna. Actually, the college without female student was a dull one for him. In the third year, Surani Chatterjee, the daughter of Income Tax Commissioner from Bihar, joined the college. She used to come to college in a vehicle and would return in the same vehicle. Devkota used to describe the physical appearance, complexion, beauty and walking style of Chatterjee among his friends. In fact, Devkota was a nature lover. Shankar Dev Panta and Chandra Bahadur Shrestha were his friends, with whom Devkota used to openly share his heart. After the entry of Miss Chatterjee in the college, Devkota especially wrote romantic poems about love and showed them to his friends.

Patna University used to publish a magazine in English language. Devkota too had given his poems written about 'love' to publish in the magazine to the editor Prof. Giridhari Mallik. But none of his poems got published in the magazine. One day, Devkota shouted on the editor of the magazine, "Why don't my poems get published in the magazine?" The editor had replied Devkota, "All of your poems were related to love, so they didn't get published." Devkota, upon hearing this, filled with rage, and replied the editor, "Sir, what do you expect anything except love from youths like us? Love is the real expression of the youth."

Devkota had set himself free in the flow of his pubescent while he was studying in Bachelor of Arts at Patna University. In those days, he would often visit the brothels, where the women used to sing and perform dances. He was welcomed with the word *aadab e huzoor* by beautiful women in the brothel, as soon as he had stepped there. Afterwards he came to know, the name of that beauty was Mumtaj! The entry fee of the place was ten rupees, but Devkota would even pay fifteen rupees to enter that delightful place. The very first day Devkota was attracted towards the lustful beauty

of twenty five years old Mumtaj. She was beautiful with a magical voice. Devkota had not seen such a beautiful lady performing such a wonderful dance and songs. Devkota wished to embrace and kiss her. He often visited the place to fulfill his wish. Due to financial crisis, he neither got to kiss nor embrace Mumtaj as he had wished.

Devkota had reached up to Lucknow from Patna to observe the ladies hidden in *burqa* (a loose garment, usually with veiled holes for the eyes worn by Muslim women). He even reached Banaras and enjoyed with the beautiful ladies. At many places, he had been tempted by alcohol and beautiful ladies. He had written poems describing prostitution and brothels. He used to present his writing based on his own experiences and also with what he had seen and heard in a simple style.

Devkota was quite often found praising women and he continued to write about them. He wrote, “What methods have we presented to the women as a self defense against the men, who cruelly oppress the women in the name of religion, and remain fearless? Japanese keep concubine in the inner courtyard, and listen to their light heartedness; upstairs, the married wife bangs her head on the floor. Beloved are considered better than the wives that are bought home after marrying. It was considered as the matter of pride to keep two, four and ten women for sexual pleasure if one had money. A brahmin woman would be treated like a low caste as soon as she becomes the second wife of her husband. As a result, the wives back home are never in peace. Husband commits adultery, but wife has to burn herself with her dead husband’s body in the funeral pyre.”

Dev Kumari Sinha (Thapa) had met Devkota in Darjeeling in early age. The trinity of Nepali literature had

gone to Darjeeling at that time. Dev Kumari had been fascinated by Devkota's attractive personality, wit and poems, among the trinity of Lekhnath Paudyal, Balkrishna Sama and Devkota. Dev Kumari had organized a dinner in the honor of the three literary figures. She had prepared the meat items, which were amongst Devkota's favorite food. In this context, Dev Kumari had written, "Devkota took the chicken roast with his hand and ate it delightfully and said, '*Sister! What a tasty roast you have made.*' How simple and natural was the Great Poet, I had become extremely delighted with joy."

Devkota often visited Darjeeling. After searching the root cause of his visits, it was found that the reason was none other than the fairy of Darjeeling, Dev Kumari Thapa. Devkota, in those days, used to tell Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav, "Shyam! Do you know what I like most in Darjeeling? I like the girl named Dev Kumari so much." Then people used to say that Devkota was fascinated by Dev Kumari. Devkota had even written in the autograph of Dev Kumari, "Dev Kumari – with beautiful appearance and heart!"

Dev Kumari used to be equally pleased to meet Devkota. Therefore, she would say till recently, "The great poet was the man who had the ability to prevent the death and disease." Dev Kumari kept telling Devkota, "The hero of my adolescence."

Devkota was gladdened with Dev Kumari and he had liked her from the core of his heart. One day he had opened his heart in front of her, "Sister, I would stay and study here only. We don't get books in Nepal, will you keep me here?" In reply, he got to hear the sweet sentence from Dev Kumari, "That would be my fortune."

Devkota once again visited Darjeeling. This time he had taken his son Padma Prasad Devkota along with him. After the demise of his two sons, he would hardly leave Padma Prasad alone. He had gone, straight to the house of Dev Kumari. And, he had said to her, "I have to go to visit many places, would you let my son stay here?" Devkota trusted Dev Kumari among a lot of other writers in Darjeeling. In addition to this, Devkota had understood the fact that Dev Kumari would not be annoyed. She'd rather provide him help in his work.

Since, Dev Kumari was beautiful, there was hardly anyone who hadn't praised of her beauty when she was a young lady. Devkota was infatuated with her beauty. Siddhicharan too had lost himself in her beauty and Bhawani Bhikchu was extremely fond of her. Bhikchu was set to tie the nuptial knot with Dev Kumari. But she had no interest in marrying Bhikchu. Devkota had liked Dev Kumari too but he didn't wish to descend making a cheap proposal on love and marriage. That's why Dev Kumari adored Devkota throughout her life and referred him as the 'great personage'.

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Devkota had special affection towards women. He used to bring the matter of women, wherever he went. He used to write what he heard and experienced. In the process of writing, he had even written 'corpse' for prostitute. He also wrote "Behold the dance of the Prostitute". Even the word 'prostitute' sounds sweet in his language. Because, he did not write it in a derogative term, rather he used this word from the point of view of a 'poetic symbol'. He would get attracted towards beautiful women and if someone would say 'let's go to look at that woman,' he would immediately follow.

Devkota had written a lot about the subject related to women. The literate women appreciated his writing as he used to write the real facts on condition of women. In this context, he had written, “The laws are made by men, but women had to show the obedience. Men have the strength, and women have to suffer the domination. Women create, and receive labor pain; men walk on their own carefree manner. Men have the freedom of misconducts, they don’t require purity. Men, who consider woman nothing but shoes, are numerous in the society. Despite being the creator, women haven’t got due respect, true love and true emotions. One of the reasons for this is – women are bounded with the loyalty to husband, men are not. Women have to tolerate a co-wife; men cannot tolerate a co-husband.” Devkota had given the following recognition to women:

“Women must be worshipped. She must be given due respect, love and protection, and a proper space in the society, considering them as jewels throughout their life.”

Devkota, in the context of women opines further: “She is a goddess, descended on earth, to show you the path of heaven, to appeal for religion, to pronounce your strength. To welcome the souls from heaven and fill the earth; she stays in the house – to give taste to the food, to add spice to life, to teach love, to fill the void, to convert the scarce into avail, to polish the darkness into bright, to make the mouth sweet, to give rhythm to the heartbeat. The one who does not acknowledge the importance and void of woman is animal and blind. You don’t recognize the heaven in your hand.”

Devkota had been devoted to the love of women, but devotion from women towards him was less in comparison. In fact, we also get to hear that initially he received the love

of women in his house, but gradually he flicked away from his wife's love.

The rumor that Devkota, during his visit to Soviet Russia, had slid on the white skin had touched the intellectual mind of Kathmandu. Shyam Das Baishnav is one of the persons who inferred that Devkota had touched the white skin. In those days, Devkota had brought a photo of a beautiful lady from Russia. He had told his nephew Padmanath Paudyal, showing the photo, "Nephew, would you have a look on a photograph of a Russian beauty?"

When Devkota was in Russia, the Russian scholar Lyudmila Aganina had served and respected Devkota with hospitality. Aganina used to translate the English Language written by Devkota into Russian language while Devkota was in Russia. She even taught Russian language to Devkota. Not only that, after listening to the free continuous flow of Devkota's speech, she wanted to pursue her Ph.D in Nepali literature. With the blessings of Devkota she did complete her Ph.D in Nepali literature. Dr. Lyudmila Aganina became established as an example of Devkota's respect to humanitarian principle. Dr. Aganina became familiar in the world of Nepalese literature when she started writing about Devkota. According to Arvinda Rimal, "It was the famous scholar Lydmila Aganina who let her countrymen roam in the world of Nepalese literature." Aganina wrote yet another article about Devkota in the Russian magazine 'Soviet Bhoomi' published in Nepali language.

Lyudmila as a scholar presented the great poet of Nepal in Russian language. Jangab Chauhan is of the opinion that she composed a short criticism about Nepalese literature. She also composed an exclusive portion in Nepali for the series depicting the history of the literary world. Some of

the poems of Devkota published in Russian under Krishna Prakash Shrestha's edition were translated by Lyudmila. Lyudmila and Shrestha had also translated into Russian a folk tale of Nepal:

A living man in the valley of death.

Lyudmila's contribution is remarkable in popularising Devkota's creations in Russia.

Devkota's concern with women was not for love and sex. He used to get close to the women for entertainment. In this backdrop, one fine day Devkota had reached Daalmandi Bazar of Banaras to see beautiful women and prostitutes. Devkota also experienced and observed the scene that beautiful prostitutes used to wave handkerchief from the windows to attract the young men. This scene too had become pleasant for him. There were no factual details about his visit to the brothels of those places with the purpose of enjoying with those women. Devkota, however, wrote a sorrowful poem entitled 'For a Beautiful Whore' with high regard in the memory of those prostitutes.

*The fairies overwhelmed to see the saint giving in
Life is mortal and ephemeral
I step into a cave so chilling
I am a florist. I worship the creation, and the nymphs.*

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Bishnu Maya Shrestha, from Khichapokhari, Kathmandu, too loved Devkota. Bishnu Maya's pet name was 'Saninaani'. Devkota would often visit her (Miss Shrestha) in Khichapokhari. It is said that Miss Shrestha, however, only acted that she loved him, just to make money. But the poem that Devkota had written in her name doesn't reflect this. The poem written by Devkota, however, shows that he loved Bishnu Maya in the real sense. In this context,

Madhu Sudan Devkota, the younger brother of Devkota had said, “The beauty of a flower and its fragrance are just meant to bring satisfaction and pleasure in the mind and eyes, without touching. My brother did not intend to smash the flower.”

Devkota’s affection towards women had been talked and commented in many places and on many occasions. Once, in the night near Rani Pokhari, Devkota was caught by the police and the police accused him of coming out of brothels. This was told by Komalnath Paudyal, the nephew of Devkota, who was also caught together with Devkota. On this matter, Devkota’s brother told Hari Shrestha, “It must have been a trick to loot the money from my brother, and spread trap for him with girl, that too by none other than my own relatives. My brother is not lustful to fall for woman so easily!” Though some people talked louder, claiming that he had no affection for women, Devkota wrote a poem, dedicated to Bishnu Maya Shrestha.

*There walked hillore in your walking piles
There would come blossoms out of healthy smiles
Just a look yielded poetry much a feat
A portrait so catchy was on the posed seat.*

A lot of people had written a lot about Devkota’s affection for women. Some of them wrote about it to degrade him, some presented the real picture and some wrote with courtesy from others. In the context of writing about Devkota’s love for women, Kumar Bahadur Joshi who had done Ph.D on Devkota, wrote with reference from others. As was told to Joshi by Basant Kumar Sharma Nepal, “There was extremely beautiful young girl near Dhobidhara who belonged to either *magar* or *newar* community. The two brothers, Laxmi Prasad and Madhu Sudan had competition between them, for her love. As a result, they had a terrible

fight among themselves. As their mother Amar Rajya Laxmi was unable to stop them from fighting, she had been crying, and at the exact moment, I had reached their house. I had no idea what kind of relation Madhu Sudan have had with that girl, but Devkota did not have lustful love for the girl. Devkota rather had planned to write poems on the girl who had become the symbol of beauty. The girl had a nickname something like Nanimaiya or Sanimaiya. I think, the ‘Charu’ from Devkota’s poem *Charu*, in reality, must have been this very beauty.”

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Devkota was an exemplar of humanitarianism. The reason for his heart roaming around was his consciousness for beauty. He was after women not only for self-satisfaction, and for self-centeredness, but he was also in search of women with the motive of help, goodwill and companionship. Not only this, he wanted to seek the path to remain close to the nature for the evidence of his tears, laughter and time.

Devkota on one hand was the worshipper of *Ardhanarishvara* (Lord Shiva) represented as half himself and half his spouse Parvati, and on the other hand, he considered women as the strength of men. Devkota had realized the fact that the men and the women in the world represent a source of creation and continuation. He was conscious about the importance of women, especially because Nepali society had not given proper value to women.

Devkota was the kind of personality who used to see the existence of male merged within the nature. He had taken women as the incarnation of nature. Therefore, he showed devotion and affection to mothers than fathers, sisters than brothers, and daughters than sons.

Due to this affection for nature, he would not be in the condition to escape from love for women. Actually, his creations had spoken his feelings in true sense. This fact is evident in almost all his writings where women are given an important place.

Devkota's Foreign Tour

The Great Poet Devkota went to Mumbai and Kolkata in 1937. He had gone to Kolkata via Mumbai on the request of Uday Lal Shrestha, son of Janak Lal Shrestha, the owner of Bhadrakali House Gramophone Production of Kathmandu, to record some songs written by him. Uday Lal Shrestha was the student of Devkota. At that time, some songs written by Devkota were recorded in Kolkata on Shrestha's request:

*There's no one who's yours – leave your pride
Don't say anything pricking or piercing – others' heart might cry
The teeth like pearl, a kind of diamond is your smile
It spells an incantation – your smile is very beautiful*

Devkota met the *viswakavi* (World-poet) Rabindranath Tagore (Thakur) for the first time in a compartment of train while he was going to Kolkata to record songs. He was immediately infatuated to the Bengali language in his meeting and conversations with Tagore. Influenced by the conversations he had with Tagore, he started to learn the Bengali language while residing in Kolkata. And, he read and learnt by heart the 'Gitanjali' written by Tagore in the Bengali language.

Devkota had killed two birds with one stone by going to Kolkata; he bought the necessary books at that time for his M. A. studies. He had bought those books with the

financial assistance of Uday Lal Shrestha. Shrestha was a rich man with a generous heart. During the course of his studies, Devkota visited India at different time periods. He frequently visited Patna and Kolkata. He used to go to Banaras as well. When he was mentally sick, he went to Ranchi as well.

When, Nepal was under the autocratic *Rana*'s rule, Devkota wrote poems praising Chandra Shumsher and Juddha Shumsher. At that time, he was also the teacher of the families of the *Ranas*. He used to receive the needed money from the *Ranas*. Devkota was like an innocent child. He could be easily persuaded by people. He couldn't differentiate between the truth and lies. He believed things easily. Therefore, he was made to go against the *Ranas*. He went to Banaras on July 30, 1947 on the influence of Ganesh Man Singh and as per the advice of Kedar Man Vyathit. Gopal Prasad Rimal and Prem Bahadur Kanshakar had accompanied him. He didn't even inform his family members then. He had not taken leave from Tri-Chandra College either. His family members did not know the details of his being away from home. Consequently, the information of his being lost was widespread in Kathmandu. On this subject, Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav has said, "Devkota was taken to Banaras misleading him in his simplicity. I say, that incident was the kidnapping of Devkota."

The Nepalese residing in Banaras were delighted to know the news of his arrival in the foreign land. There was a grand preparation for his welcome. The Nepali National Congress had kept him under its protection in Banaras on the condition to look after him. Devkota's main job there was editing the '*Yugavani*'. Before his presence in Banaras, the pamphlets and statements of the Nepali National

Congress were printed in the Hindi language. And, after he joined there, all the official dealings and publications of the Congress were carried out in the Nepali language. Though Devkota was a renowned intellectual figure, his life style there was not above the life of a coolie or porter or ploughman. But, this didn't deter Devkota from being conscious about his responsibility and was dedicated to the task given to him. On one hand Devkota worked in Banaras entangling his life for bread and shelter; on the other hand, his house in Kathmandu was surrounded by the police of the *Rana* regime as a reprimand against his going there and opposing the *Ranas*. His family members could not enter his house without the permission of the police and army at that time. Meanwhile his son Krishna also died. Not only this, alleging that Devkota was engaged in treason, he was sacked from Tri-Chandra College and Nepali Language Translation Council.

Devkota's eldest son Prakash Prasad went to Banaras to meet his father. Simultaneously, Mana Devi also reached Banaras looking for her husband. Devkota left for Kolkata to attend his felicitation ceremony leaving his wife in Banaras who had just reached there from Nepal.

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Devkota had gone to Kolkata from Banaras on the invitation of the 'Nepalese Students Association' of the Kolkata University 'Himanchal Students' Association'. According to the Literary Minister of 'Himanchal Students' Association' Ram Hari Joshi, Devkota was felicitated there in a grand manner. In that ceremony, Devkota had given a speech in Nepali and English language in roaring voice. His substantial speech had influenced the Bengali students. The Bengali-Hindi Council had also organized felicitation

ceremony for Devkota in a grand manner two days afterwards. In that ceremony as well, he delivered a continuous and free flow speech in English and Bengali language. Because of this, he became instantly famous among Kolkata's Bengali learned persons; this detail is learnt from former Minister Ram Hari Joshi. After that, he was invited to read poems in the All India Radio of Kolkata. He went to the Radio station with Ganesh Man Singh, Ram Hari Joshi, Gopal Prasad Bhattarai and Devendra Raj Upadhyaya. At the time of recording the poem, Devkota was given a voucher by the manager of the Radio Station to sign as a token of receiving 10 rupees as his remuneration. Devkota refused to take that money and said, "How much remuneration do you provide Rabindranath Tagore to read a poem? I haven't come here because I couldn't read poems elsewhere." In a fit of rage, Devkota left with his group without reading the poem.

While he was in Kolkata, he stayed at Ram Hari Joshi's Law College Boarding Hostel and at other times at Devendra Raj Upadhyaya's rented room at Tarak Dutta Road. The house Upadhyaya was staying belonged to Gopal Prasad Shrestha. Shrestha was a singer as well. He worked as a government employee and he was the motor driver of the Governor. Therefore, Devkota was taken to 'All India Radio' in the very expensive vehicle of the Government body.

During Devkota's stay in Devendra Raj Upadhyaya's rented room in Kolkata, everything was taken care of by Gopal Prasad Shrestha including lodging and food. Shrestha was big-hearted. Devkota wrote some poems staying in Gopal Prasad Shrestha's house.

When Devkota was staying in Kolkata, he was requested by Ram Hari Joshi and Devendra Raj Upadhyaya to write poems. Devkota made Joshi and Upadhyaya write a

spontaneous poem of 93 couplets staying at D.K. Shahi's rented room. Devkota also wrote the poem 'Tears' in the presence of Ganesh Man Singh. Ram Hari Joshi and Devendra Raj Upadhyaya requested Devkota to write a poem on Mahatma Gandhi. Devkota then and there wrote a longer poem 'Sonnets' with the title *Baapu*.

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Devkota returned to Banaras after staying one month in Kolkata. And he again went to Darjeeling. He was accompanied by Ganesh Man Singh. When in Darjeeling, he used to enjoy the place. According to C.K Prasai and Prof. Dr. Bhisma Raj Prasai, Devkota used to live in Darjeeling at the house of Devi Prasad Uprety who was a prominent social worker dedicated to education. He stayed there for nearly three months.

In 1948, while in Darjeeling, Devkota also visited River Tista. When he was standing on the bridge of Tista, Mahendra Prasad Giri requested him to write a poem on the 'Tista', and Devkota immediately wrote a poem of 40 couplets in the English language. Among these poems, nine couplets were published by Himalaya Times in the category 'Nepali Literary Activity outside Nepal'. He had surprised the intellectual world there, demonstrating his academic excellence.

Devkota stayed for about one year in Banaras with his wife Mana Devi. On September 22, 1949 they returned to Nepal because of the difficulty that they faced to manage their living there. Also, the *Ranas* had asked them to return to Nepal.

Devkota had again gone to Darjeeling in October 1952 from Kathmandu. Lekhnath Paudyal and Balkrishna Sama

had accompanied Devkota. Lekhnath Paudyal, Balkrishna Shama and Laxmi Prasad Devkota were declared a trinity weaving them in a garland by the united decision of the triad of Darjeeling *Sudhapa* or Surya Bikram Gyawali, Dharanidhar Koirala and Paras Mani Pradhan.

Devkota and Balkrishna Sama went to Sikkim on the invitation of 'Apatan Literary Council' on November 18 1952. 'Apatan Literary Council' and the 'Royal family' accorded a grand welcome to Devkota and Balkrishna Sama. When the ceremony was taking place, Devkota wrote a poem and read it out. The very next day, the Nepali writers were entertained by the King of Sikkim Tashi Namgyal inviting them to the Royal Palace. Devkota wrote a poem praising the King Namgyal. The title of that poem written in the English language in 14 lines was 'To His Highness Sir Tashi Namgyal *Maharaja* of Sikkim'. He had given that poem to the King himself the day he met him. At the King's palace, Devkota and Sama were photographed sitting right and left of the king 'King Namgyal'.

Devkota went to Darjeeling again in 1953. This time he was invited by the Government of West Bengal to provide policy guidelines on setting and finalizing the course books on Nepali language. He used to do any work, which was assigned to him with full dedication and interest.

In 1953, Devkota went to Romania. He was included in the delegation participating in the 'Fourth World Youth Festival' by Purna Bahadur M.A. While going to Romania, he had bought the bedding of quilt and sleeping mattress to sleep at night. Purna Bahadur M.A. told him "Let's not carry this, it has no use in Europe; we'll be kept there in hotels." But, Devkota did not listen to Purna Bahadur M.A. and carried the bedding. And, they left for Europe boarding

an aeroplane. During their stop at several places, they didn't find any porter to carry their luggage. Therefore, Devkota himself carried his bedding. He looked like a porter. Even so, he was in a pleasant mood. Though he did not have to open the bedding there, he did not discard the bedding and brought it all the way back to his home. After staying in Romania for 20 days, they also travelled to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Soviet Russia. Inspired by the environment of Hungary, Devkota wrote a poem in English language. The poem was published on the front-page of a magazine called 'Mahotsav'. The poem was praised by the litterateurs and intellectuals who were present there.

Devkota went to Peking, China from Moscow, Russia on a Trans Siberian Rail. That rail-track was thought to be the longest route of the world. Five Nepalese were also invited to China including Purna Bahadur M.A. and Devkota to take part in the Chinese National Day from among those who had gone to Romania.

Devkota was inspired by everything while in China. He was very much influenced by China among the countries he had travelled. He remained an admirer of the lifestyle and friendliness of the Chinese people. They shook hand with Mao Tse-Tung. They stayed for about two months in China and travelled to many places. They were fascinated by Mao Tse-Tung. Devkota was the firsthand witness of the fact about the Chinese people regarding Mao Tse-Tung being respected just as the Nepalese regarded Lord Pashupatinath.

After returning from China to Nepal, Devkota, went on praising China in a one sided way. After his return to Nepal, he spoke about China for the first time in a gathering

organized in Kathmandu's Teen Dhara School. And after some days, he gave a marvelous speech on China in Gaur. According to Narayan Man Bijukchhe 'Rohit', Devkota mentioned about his visit to many villages in China. Because of his infatuation with China, many people said, 'Devkota has become a Communist'. Not only that, he also wrote two poems in English in love for China, which were entitled '*Oh, China's Sons!*' and '*October 1st and the Peking City*'. After Govinda Bhatta translated those poems in Nepali, these were published in 'Jaskelo' and 'Darpan'. Mod Nath Prashrit had also created his work in course of describing that poem. After writing those poems, Devkota's personal life started becoming the prime target of the Congress. Some Congress men had started to call him a communist from then onwards.

In 1954, Devkota again went to Darjeeling, India to finalize the Nepali course books. He went to Delhi the same year. He had gone there to participate in the Afro-Asian People's Conference. During the same time, he had also visited the Taj Mahal of Agra. Included in that team were Balkrishna Sama, Siddhicharan Shrestha, Purna Bahadur M.A., and Krishna Bahadur Manandhar. They stayed at the Imperial Hotel in Delhi. Meanwhile, their pockets started to get empty. Then they panicked. Devkota met Subarna Shumsher in Delhi and gave the details about their financial condition. Subarna Shumsher gave him the necessary money. Devkota happily went to the hotel and distributed that money among his four friends in proportionate manner. He did not keep a single rupee from that money for himself. He wanted to make his friends happy. Then, they went to attend the meeting. There he had given a continuous and free flow speech. Listening to him, the participating countries were able to identify the

true intellectual level of Nepal and praised Nepal with an open heart.

The Afro-Asian Writers' Conference was organized in Delhi in 1956. Bhim Nidhi Tiwari, Kedar Man Vyathit, Bhawani Bhikchu, Madhav Ghimire, Ishwar Baral, Shankar Lamichhane, Krishnachandra Singh Pradhan were also present in the conference and the team was under the leadership of Devkota. The Indian Government had taken them on a visit to most of India's places for about one month. Devkota's poems were then broadcasted from 'All India Radio' at the initiation of Harivansh Rai Bachchan. Purna Das Shrestha had organized the Nepalese Poet's conference in Mumbai. The chief guest of that ceremony was also Devkota.

There was an interesting incident connected with Devkota in the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference organized in Delhi. Due to his unstable mind, he had rebuked the Indian leader Raj Gopal Acharya in the conference in a simple pretext. Raj Gopal Acharya was a man respected even by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Because Devkota had perused him one-sidedly, the meeting turned somewhat sour especially to the Nepalese participants. Bhawani Bhikchu mentioned about this incident till late. The incident was actually felt by everyone. Kedar Man Vyathit had said, "Devkota served irony against irony and saved the existence of Nepal and Nepalese literature." Devkota was a man of respect as cited by the Indian media. The standard Hindi literary magazine of 'Dharmayug' published Devkota's colorful picture on its front cover page.

Devkota went to Delhi on study tour to various universities of India leading the delegation of Tribhuvan University on February 24, 1958. Included in that delegation

were Yadunath Khanal, Sharada Prasad Upadhyaya, Bhairab Bahadur Pradhan, Dhruba Man Amatya and Dambar Narayan Yadav. This delegation had inspected the Universities of Delhi, Kolkata, Banaras, Baroda, Mysore, Pune and Lucknow and studied their activities. His abdomen was also checked-up in Kolkata. The doctor advised him saying, "You've ulcer (ulcerative colitis) and it has to be operated immediately." But, his friends in the delegation gave him the advice not to have the operation, as a result of which he had cancer. Again the next year or in 1959 he went to Kolkata in connection with his treatment. There he got admitted to P. G. Hospital. The operation of his stomach was carried out. It was learnt that he had cancer of the stomach.

Devkota went to the middle Asian region of the Soviet Union, the capital of Uzbekistan with his wife to participate in the Afro-Asian Literary Conference in 1959. The learned men and women of 30 nations took part in the conference. It was again on the doctor's advice he was given two bottles of blood before speaking in the ceremony.

The speech given by Devkota in the 'Afro-Asian Literary Conference' was very significant, dignified and diffused with intellectual consciousness. That address had touched the minds of the academicians all over the world. It was the first time the Nepali literature had travelled to the world in a rigorous way. In this context Arbinda Rimal writes, "The litterateurs of Asia and Africa had gathered there to make their voice loud and clear in support of the fighters of the national emancipation movement which was going on against the foreign colonist rules in their continents. The speech given by Great Poet Devkota was so brilliant, contextual and encountering that the conference made it as its proclamation paper and broadcast it all over the world."

The speech by the Great Poet Devkota in Tashkent was considered as of a high standard among the participants of the 30 nations. Lauding the speech by Devkota light-heartedly, the Chairperson of the 'Afro-Asian Literary Conference' and famous Russian poetess M. Zulfiya wrote a letter to Kanchan Pudasaini, "The contribution of Nepal's Great Poet Devkota was incomparable to the success of the Tashkent Conference." The topic on which Devkota spoke were extensive than the words he had written. He spoke on many subjects for long and concluded with literature, "Maybe, to sing the songs of the pleasures of life in this world, all litterateurs are born, which provide happiness to men. Men heard the pleasant and powerful call of life and tried to keep its pleasure alive for an unlimited period."

Devkota also visited Azerbaijan in Russia on his way back from Tashkent. He stayed at the Moscow Hospital of Russia for a month for treatment. Due to great financial tension, he also kept on writing there. In that context his wife Mana Devi informed to general public, "We didn't have a single *paisa* with us when it was about time to return home; hence, I said to him thinking of a solution, "Maybe, we can earn some money from your poems. He liked my idea. After that, I somehow managed some cigarettes for him. He wrote many articles and poems relying on those cigarettes. Seeing that, the doctors and patients were amazed. One of the representatives of a certain magazine who came to meet him from time to time took those writings, made them published, and gave us a lump sum later. We got gifts for our children from the payment."

After Devkota returned from Russia, the politicians of the Democratic Party stood against him. Making the futile meaning as their subject of accusation, they filled the ears of

King Mahendra alleging that Devkota had gone to Russia without asking the King. Not only that, they started to go against him, taking the instances of the poem he had written in praise of China and Mao Tse-Tung five years back. He was alleged of being a communist.

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Devkota had an earnest desire to go on a world tour. His desire was supported by Janak Lal Sharma. They would often discuss about the world tour plan.

Devkota's Illness

During the early childhood, Devkota was feeble and weak. If someone spoke with him loudly, he used to get frightened and cry. He used to suffer from illness most of the time. It was as if sickness was an inborn entity to him i.e. he often used to suffer from illness of any sort. He looked lean and thin.

Devkota suffered from dysentery when he was four years old. He got thinner. He was taken to many faith healers and enchanters for the treatment, but it was of no use. Finally, his parents stopped worrying about him. During this period, his eldest sister Lok Priya Devi came to her mother's home. On her initiation, once again, an old faith healer was brought in the home for Devkota's treatment. The faith healer asked them to make *sel roti* (a Nepali traditional homemade sweet which is ring shaped rice bread/doughnut). Then the old faith healer sprinkled the sacred grass water on Devkota's head. He dipped water in *kush* (a kind of holy herb used in worshipping) and sprinkled the water on Devkota and later on *sel roti*. The faith healer then gave *sel roti* to a dog to eat on the road outside. Devkota's younger brother Madhusudan writes that Devkota was immediately cured after this.

Devkota fell seriously ill when he was 19 years old. He was bed-ridden for 15 days. The people in the Devkota

neighborhood thought that Devkota the third child of the Devkota family would not survive. But, he proved them wrong, and was a winner against all ailments, and he survived.

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When Devkota was studying Bachelor of Law in Patna, he almost survived from being dead because of his mischief. When he was at the hostel, he shook his nose very hard inserting one finger inside it. After that, he sneezed for five times, one after another. As a result, his nose started to bleed. So much so that blood flowed from his nose and mouth after this. His body was completely drenched in blood. His friend Chandra Bahadur Shrestha was a bit scared to have witnessed that incident; and, immediately, sent a telegram to Lekhnath Devkota in Kathmandu, “Now Laxmi Prasad will die, come immediately.” And Shrestha continued looking after Devkota and arranged the service of doctor for his treatment. Devkota’s improvement in the condition was felt after the treatment of Dr. Dukhanram. Devkota regained health. After this, Shrestha again sent a telegram to Kathmandu saying, “Laxmi Prasad is cured. Now, there’s no need to worry.”

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When he was studying Master of Arts, Devkota suffered from depression. He was found acting abnormally. In order to improve his health, his eldest brother Lekhnath took Devkota to Gosaikunda, a holy place. When that trip to Gosaikund failed to cure him, he was taken to Ranchi. After treatment at Ranchi, he returned home. He caught some sort of cognitive strain after two years. Again, Devkota was taken to Mana Devi’s maternal uncle’s house at Jhiltung of Nuwakot with a view to give him a new environment. He

stayed there. His inspiration to write *Kunjini* came from that particular place.

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When Devkota was in Banaras in 1947, he was seriously infected by malaria. He had 107 degree Fahrenheit fever. When he was trying to get up from the bed, he fell and banged down hard on a stone. He lay on the bed without paying heed to anything and had fever for a month. Finally, he got well. He had no money for treatment, but by God's grace he survived.

When he was in India in 1958, he felt that he was not feeling well and had his health check. The Indian Government had also helped in his treatment. He was admitted to Lucknow Hospital. He learnt from the hospital that he had problem in his pancreas. Later on, he went to Kolkata and had his health checked-up. He was advised by the doctors to have an operation but he listened to the advice of his friends who suggested not to have operation.

After returning to Kathmandu, Devkota went to Shanta Bhavan Hospital for his health check-up. There, Dr. Edgar R. Miller checked him. Miller stated that he had peptic ulcer and prescribed medicines. And he advised Devkota to come to the hospital in a week's time. Then onwards, Devkota suffered from burning and aching in his stomach.

It was with Dr. Miller's advice that Devkota had gone to P.G. Hospital, Kolkata for his treatment in 1959. The news that he had reached there was learnt by some Nepalese living in Kolkata. And there was no dearth of people visiting him. One of the persons visiting him was Somnath Ghimire Vyas. Upon meeting Vyas, Devkota had said, "...Please friends! Kindly collect all my books and writings, and burn

them and I would lose this pain by basking in the warmth of the fire.” After he had said this, one woman (probably Devkota’s wife) gestured that, “his mind is not in order” by placing her index finger on her temple. Devkota saw that sight. And he got enraged and mumbled, “They have not come here for my treatment! They’ve come to visit Kolkata, to buy nice *sarees* and to watch movies.” Saying this, Devkota’s speech changed into crying. He wept bitterly in front of Vyas.

The examination of his health at Kolkata confirmed that Devkota had cancer. His ulcer had developed because of the gap in food schedule on the one hand and because of his addiction to cigarettes on the other. He, once again, went to Kolkata to cure his disease. All the expenses for his treatment (five thousand rupees) were given by King Mahendra at that time. The Cultural Consular of the Indian Embassy Dr. Shiva Mangal Singh ‘Suman’ arranged Devkota’s two-way air ticket from his part. Also, Dr. Suman had written a letter to the famous Indian businessman and social worker Birla to help Devkota in emergency. Dr. Suman was not only a diplomat, but also a well-known poet of the Hindi literature. He was an admirer of Devkota. Therefore, he took interest in every affair of Devkota from the core of his heart.

When Devkota reached Kolkata for treatment, the Himanchal Students’ Union also provided him with the financial assistance of one thousand rupees. He also received the assistance of one thousand rupees from the wives of King Tribhuvan, Queen Kanti and Queen Ishwari who were in Kolkata at that time.

In Kolkata, Devkota was admitted at the P.G. Hospital. The doctors operated him. At that time, nearly two kilograms

of flesh was taken out from his stomach infected with cancer. Devkota learnt that he had cancer. He stayed in Kolkata for 34 days. During that period, Mana Devi, younger brother Madhusudan, eldest daughter Sabitri, eldest son-in-law Kalyan Regmi and nephew Keshav Chandra Gautam stayed with him.

Somnath Ghimire 'Vyas' again went to meet Devkota when he was at the hospital. Devkota was in a doubt whether he would live or die. In this context, Devkota told Vyas, "Many times I had a near to death experiences, but couldn't take me away. I think, a place to punish a terrible sinner like me in hell was not yet made. Therefore, it left me. As soon as such a place is made, I'll be taken away."

When Devkota was staying at the hospital, the expenses allocated for him was also mismanaged. According to Bhawani Bhikchu, "During the time when Devkota had gone for treatment, most of the amount of the allocated money was used by his family members to watch movies, travel where they liked and eat what they liked."

There is an interesting and pricking context of Devkota's operation at the hospital. Actually, enough money for his operation was deposited in the hospital. The money due was kept by Devkota in his suitcase and he had tied the key of the suitcase in a knot in his *janai* (sacred thread). But, the money in the suitcase was stolen. The money was stolen in front of Devkota's eyes. Devkota did not say anything even then. There followed now a continuous flow of tears from his eyes. The person who stole the money was one of Devkota's own relatives. But, due to the fear that it would give a bad repute, he did not reveal it to anyone.

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Devkota was at home but his mind was still not stable. His health deteriorated 'two times in day and four times at night' or geometrically; because, he worried too much. He was again taken to different places within and outside the valley with a view to change his mind and provide a fresh environment. In the process, he was also taken to Tokha. They had gone to Tokha in an old Russian jeep which belonged to Dillibazar's Ratnakaji Shrestha. But, on reaching Hattigauda, the jeep became out of order and they walked up to Budhanilkantha. After reaching Budhanilkantha, his brothers Madhusudan, Gopimadhav and paternal nephew Buddhi Kumar Devkota and maternal nephew Keshav Chandra Gautam and Madhav Chalise became engaged in managing and preparing food. According to Chooda Mani Bandhu, Devkota was engaged in writing during that time as well.

After having food at Narayanthan, the whole team left for the destination. It was raining heavily. Despite heavy rainfall, they reached Tokha. Devkota stayed at Tokha for a week and wrote more than two dozen poems. From Tokha to Sankhu wherever they went, he didn't stop writing poems.

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In 1959 when Devkota went to Tashkent to take part in a literary meeting, he got himself admitted at the Botkin Hospital of Moscow on the request of the writers of Russian Language. According to the information given by Devkota to King Mahendra, he had stayed at that hospital for treatment for a month.

Devkota returned to Nepal from Russia. He had become very weak. And, in addition to that, his financial condition was so weak to meet his daily expenses as if it

was a battlefield of *Mahabharat*. The allowance he was receiving from the Royal Nepal Academy was also discontinued during that time. And he was unable to give tuitions. His health deteriorated in manifolds due to his financial condition. It was the day of 22nd May 1959. There was the ceremony of the traditional worship of *diwali*, worship offered to some tutelary deity in the family. Ambrosia was distributed marking the end of the ritual, taking of which incited vomit in Devkota. He had vomited for a long time. He was taken to Shanta Bhavan Hospital and brought back home the same day. He was again admitted to P.G. Hospital in Kolkata on the advice of Dr. Edgar R. Miller on 20th of June. He had received the financial assistance of two thousand rupees for his treatment from King Mahendra. After staying there for few days, he returned to Nepal because he ran out of money.

According to Devkota's close friend Hari Shrestha, he himself went to Prime Minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala with the application of Devkota for financial assistance, which was signed by Devkota himself. Hari Shrestha made a continuous attempt to get assistance. Finally at the initiation, effort and wish of the active politician Ganesh Man Shrestha of Dharan, Koirala handed over three hundred rupees to Devkota through Hari Shrestha. "The then government was indifferent towards Devkota and it was only after many attempts that the money was made available." Shrestha has written about this in his book.

Taking Devkota's weak financial condition into consideration, Kathmandu Municipality and India-Nepal Friendship Association each had given him five hundred rupees. In this context, Devkota's friend Hari Shrestha has written again, "Though the government was silent, the students started the movement of collecting donation in paper

box in front of the main gate of Singha Durbar.” Also, the academicians of Nepal Academy donated their 15 days’ salary; that totalled nearly three thousand rupees. The ‘Kalamandal’ had also contributed 90 rupees for Devkota by collecting public donation. Prime Minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala also assured Devkota of providing the expenses for his treatment through Minister Ganesh Man Singh. It was 24th of June 1959, the government issued a notice, “From now on, the bill of treatment of Devkota would be paid by the government.” The government had taken that decision at the pressure and insistence of Ganesh Man Singh. This bit of information has been given by Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav and Hari Shrestha.

After Devkota was admitted in Shanta Bhawan hospital, Kanti Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah and Ishwari Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah came to see him there. They gave five thousand rupees to Devkota. Ratna Rajya also provided Devkota an assistance of five thousand rupees. Devkota was very grateful to them. The cash of five thousand rupees was a bit of relief— Hari Shrestha writes in his book *The memoirs of the past*. The things collected for assistance were put elsewhere by Mana Devi. Devkota’s brother Gopinath said so to Madan Mani Dixit.

Devkota was admitted in the Shanta Bhawan hospital on 19 August 1959. Devkota had said to Dr. Edger R. Miller, “Doctor! Please admit me in this hospital. I’ve come to die here.” He felt aching and burning in his stomach as if a burning rod had been pierced inside. King Tribhuvan’s wives Kanti and Ishwari went there to meet him. They decided to help Devkota for the treatment wherever. Therefore, mentioning the support of the queens in his treatment, he wrote a letter in English stating that he should be admitted at the hospital in Moscow. But, Dr. Miller

expressed the view that Devkota could not be cured now with medication. So, Devkota's that letter did not work at all and he became weak day by day with tears in his eyes. In this context, British poet Dom Moraes wrote shedding further light, "Though the Queen Mother of Nepal had promised Devkota that he could be treated in Russia, with the treatment expenses borne by the Queen Mother, it was too late."

Devkota was at Shanta Bhawan in the critical stage of life and death. Money was stolen from his suitcase once again. As usual, the key of the suitcase was tied to Devkota's sacred thread; but the money kept inside the box was lost. According to Hari Shrestha, one of the relatives of Devkota must have stolen that money.

The Great Poet Devkota was taken from Shanta Bhawan hospital to Pashupati Aryaghat on September 27, 1959. Regarding this, Dr. Edgar R. Miller has written, "In our absence, Mana Devi had taken Devkota to the river hurriedly without informing the hospital. Devkota was not willing to die that time." Then, Mana Devi had hurriedly taken Devkota to Harikunj from the hospital saying that his condition was critical. Many people gathered at the premises of Pashupatinath to get a glimpse of Devkota. Devkota had said in English to his niece's husband Amarnath Uprety who was the one among those present there, "Son-in-Law! I'm burning with fire inside. I am unable to tolerate this. I'm facing a sense of dejection. Please bring and give me 'Potassium Cyanide', I would like to be free from this physical pain and would like to rest in peace forever."

Devkota was beloved in the eyes of the public even when he was near death. When a crowd was gathered at

Harikunj to see him, he wanted to offer them seats. He felt uncomfortable to be watched like that, making the people stand. Therefore, he had told Balaram Shramjivi, “Balramji! It’d be nice if few chairs were put here.”

During his stay at Harikunj, Devkota suffered from the problem of excessive accumulation of water in his stomach. After this, Mana Devi worriedly asked someone to telephone Dr. Edgar R. Miller, “We’re in a great difficulty, should we bring the patient or not?” Dr. Miller was a great man. He agreed to bring Devkota back to the Shanta Bhawan Hospital from Pashupatinath again to take out water from his body on 30th August. Dr. Miller served Devkota after that as well. And with tears in his eyes Devkota had said to Dr. Miller, “If I were in a communist country, today, I wouldn’t have been in this condition.”

Hari Shrestha told Bal Mukundadev Pandey, editor of ‘Naya Samaj’ that Devkota had again returned to the hospital. And then the news was published in ‘Naya Samaj’ that Devkota’s health was critical. After the publication of this news, a large number of people gathered at the Shanta Bhawan Hospital to see Devkota.

When Devkota was in the Shanta Bhawan Hospital, many people who were his well-wishers kept on coming to the hospital to express their love for him. Some shed tears in his name, some expressed their grief and some even contributed literary works in his name. In this context, Balkrishna Sama also wrote an immortal poem on his name. And, Sama himself went to the Shanta Bhawan Hospital and placed that poem in Devkota’s hand itself. On Devkota’s request, Sama read out the poem. Devkota read that poem again with great difficulty in front of some of his relatives. The closeness between Devkota and Sama was

unforgettable. This bit of information was revealed from Devkota's personal assistant Kanchan Pudasaini. The poem which Sama wrote in dedication to Devkota also received attention among the intellectuals during those days. This fact was put forth by Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav. Sama had written a letter in the form of poem to Devkota and he had kept a copy of it with himself as well. In the copy of the poem kept by Sama, it is written as, "Presented to Shree Laxmi Prasad Devkota in his hand at the Shanta Bhawan Hospital, Patan":

Dear Devkota,

*We all are watching the battle surrounding you,
Great warrior; you're fighting with the great death alone,
You are extensively wounded; your enemy is the strongest in the world,
It's attacking our poet with all weapons,
Oh, Brave! Be victorious – we express this well-wish only!
You're falling, kneeling and retreating,
But are still fighting, your bravery,
The poetic spirit in you is not melted yet,
Seeing your poetic breathing we get hopeful,
Don't turn your back getting impatient, keep the name of poet-mother;
All your life you turned into many poems many pains touching with tears,
Now even if death comes, embrace it and make that itself a poem,
Getting victorious over death, keep the name of the first poet the Kailashpati!
Fight without fear, brave poet, be it victory or defeat in war... !
Remember; 'Hato va prapsyasi swargam jitwa wa bhakchhayase mahim...'
Because in half the age giving the heavenly height to the Nepali
literature, you've always deserved praise,
Now if you could live the remaining half age what'd it be?
Oh Great Poet, you'd become the poet-emperor of this world!
You've conquered both the sides,
No matter how much bodily pain you've to endure;
May the universal peace, peace, peace reside in your heart!*

Your friend

Bal Krishna Sama

Gyaneshwar, Kathmandu

October 2, 1959

It appeared Devkota's health would recover in the Shanta Bhawan Hospital. He spoke from the death-bed in front of his relatives, assistants and his wife, "Would I die now?" All those present seemed happy. But the next day Dr. Miller again checked Devkota's health. He announced that Devkota's condition was not only serious, but very serious. He then advised the relatives to take Devkota to Pashupati *Aryaghat*. Upon hearing the news, Devkota was half-dead. Dr. Miller's declaration brought weeping and crying among Devkota's relatives.

Devkota received a lot of affection from Dr. Edgar R. Miller. The doctor on his part had not loved other patients the way he cared for Devkota. This was because Devkota was not only a man, but he was a great man. Dr. Miller wanted to keep Devkota alive for even a day more. Therefore, he said to Devkota at that time, "If you want I can keep you alive for a week by giving more blood to you." Upon hearing this Devkota replied, "I don't want to take out the blood by painning others. To live like this would be an additional crime." After this, Devkota was sent to the Pashupati *Aryaghat* without any hope of coming back to the hospital. There he was kept at the *Dharmashala*.

"I'm fed up with drinking blood of humans. Therefore I've come to die here." Devkota had given this statement to his friend, the European poet Dom Moraes while he was dying. "I consider myself the most unfortunate of all Nepalese writers", Devkota had said.

During the final stage of his life, Devkota expressed his wish to Mana Devi to have a view of *Gangajal* (the holy water of River Ganga). And, he was moved near the window of the room. Lying on the bed near the window viewing the banks of the Bagmati River, he saw a dead

body burning flaringly in front of his eyes. Showing that scene to his wife, Devkota said, “Dear! It’d be my turn after that body is burnt, isn't it?” And eventually it happened as what Devkota said. Finally, it was the time to make an exit from the world. But even after his demise, he remains immortal.

Devkota's stay at Ranchi

Devkota suffered from different kinds of illness. Mental stress became another additional problem in Devkota's life. When Devkota used to suffer from mental stress, he used to cry loudly, yell and get nervous. After that, he used to walk unconsciously. His mental condition was getting worse day by day. He used to get out of his house losing his senses. About the condition of Devkota, Chooda Mani Bandhu has written, "Many a time Devkota experienced that his family members considered him insane, so, he responded accordingly." Many people made their own interpretations about Devkota. In this context, Govinda Bhatta wrote about him, "Though he was seen negligent, whimsical, self-centered, and playful, Devkota was always alert, active and was aware of the national as well as international state of affairs."

His wife Mana Devi Devkota had said about his unusual condition, "It was the time when our son was serious. I was in another room with my sick son. Devkota had fallen asleep. I had tightly put the mosquito net over the bed, and slightly slanted the door looking after my son. He was very weak and would wander around unconsciously since he had recovered from illness. Once, I got up to wake up my son for him to urinate. Then, perturbed by doubt, I looked in my husband's room. The mosquito net was still intact, but he was not in the bed. As he was missing, I then woke up other family members and we all searched him everywhere. He

had just walked out of his room and was sitting in a squatting position near the door of Chooda Prasad's house. Later on, we all brought him back home. People scolded me for not taking proper care of my husband. I don't know how I was mistaken that day, even though I stayed alert."

Sometimes, Devkota used to be in a state as if he was obsessed. It seemed as if he had lost his consciousness. According to Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav, Devkota's face used to be black and blue. In addition, spitting unstopably he used to say, "I feel like chewing this whole universe all at once." Devkota's behavior used to be uncommon from time to time. So much so that, once he had told Surendra Bahadur Shah, "This head has become heavy. I feel like breaking my head striking against that front wall." About his similar state of mind, Nitya Raj Pandey has also written, "He used to say, the water from the waterspout at Kumaristhan made his heart calm." Thus he used to recreate the feeling by pouring the water in his head. Devkota used to feel that he was in an adverse situation. He used to share his feelings with those who understood him. In this connection, one day he had said to Balkrishna Sama, "Mr. Sama! Sometimes I feel as if the sky has fallen on my head." In fact, Devkota used to keep the whole universe in his brain. He used to be involved in himself in various thoughts, necessary and unnecessary, that caused his mind even heavier. Therefore, sometimes he used to be in a state of uneasiness. People around Devkota claimed that he suffered from mental imbalance. One of the students of Devkota, Tej Bahadur Prasai had said, "People often call him mad; but, when I started to learn from him, I got impressed by his ideas. He was the forerunner of the revolution for the transformation of the society and was an eminent scholar. For all Nepalese, Devkota was a dignified personality during those days."

Devkota once got up at midnight and went out. After knowing this, his sister's son Komalnath Paudyal and younger brother Gopimadhav left out in search of him at that night. They met Devkota around Rani Pokhari. But, at that time, police arrested them at the ridge of Rani Pokhari and immediately took them to the police station. They were kept on the floor of the police office. Devkota had worn only a *dhoti*. They were shivering because of the chill. Talking about the incident, Devkota's nephew Komalnath Paudyal has said, "We asked the police to give us a *sukul* (sleeping mat) saying we'd pay for it. However, the police did not give and rebuking us, they said, "You have come from a whorehouse and you need a sleeping mat!" Then, the three brothers smoked hemp along with other prisoners and passed the night in the prison. In this context Devkota's wife says, "No matter how much we requested the police for his release, they did not free him since it was already midnight." The next day Devkota's eldest brother Lekhnath wrote a letter to the bodyguard of Juddha Shumsher, requesting for their release. Then they were freed from the prison.

Devkota was struck by mental illness around 1933. It was during the time when he was studying Bachelor of Law in Patna. In this context, his niece Mitthu Aryal had said, "We heard the news that my third uncle had started to get mentally unstable while studying in Patna. Immediately after getting the news, my father Lekhnath Devkota went to Patna. Uncle Devkota's B. L. exam was approaching. My father stayed there looking after my uncle. After the completion of exams, father returned to Nepal along with my uncle."

The death of Devkota's father and mother one after another had created additional mental strain on him. His family faced a great difficulty to take care of him.

Devkota had gone to Mumbai in the year 1937. He had also gone to Kolkata to record some songs the same time. There, he witnessed Hindu-Muslim riots. He was terrified by the incident. That incident had put another additional mental strain on his mind and heart. He ventilated that agony on a shoemaker. Devkota and his younger brother Mitranath were walking on a road in Kolkata. At one spot, Devkota gave his torn shoes to mend to a shoemaker. As the shoes were being mended, Devkota and the shoemaker were busy talking each other in a carefree manner. But, after some time, Devkota got angry with the shoemaker on a simple topic. The dispute between Devkota and the shoemaker became so tense that they started assaulting each other. His brother Mitranath had to shed much sweat to sooth their dispute.

During the days when Devkota had gone to Kolkata, Mitranath Devkota was studying at the St. Xavier's College. He had come to know about the mental imbalance of his elder brother since then. Especially after the incident of Devkota's scuffle with the shoemaker, it was concluded that Devkota was suffering from mental imbalance and it was decided to bring him back to Nepal as quickly as possible.

Then, Devkota's younger brother Mitranath brought him to Birganj. Udaya Lal Shrestha had also accompanied and supported them on the whole journey. They faced a great difficulty to bring Devkota from Kolkata to Birganj in that condition. After their arrival at Birganj, it became extremely difficult to control Devkota. Finally, with no solution at hand, Uday Lal Shrestha sent a telegram to Devkota's house. Its detail was: "The mental status of Laxmi Prasad is not sound, come to take him immediately." After receiving the telegram, Devkota's younger brother Madhusudan left Kathmandu and

reached Birganj. After meeting his younger brother Madhusudan in Birganj, the Great Poet Devkota asked him, “Brother, what is *jihad* (a struggle or fight against the enemies of Islam) and *halal* (denoting to meat prepared as prescribed by Muslim law)?”

After Devkota’s arrival in Kathmandu, his mind became somewhat stable and his brain started to work partly. Still, he used to get nervous from time to time and used to get frightened. The faith healers’ efforts to cure him was in vain. Then it was decided by Devkota’s family to take him to mental hospital in Ranchi. However, the difficulty still remained in managing necessary expenses for his treatment in Ranchi. Then nearly after a year, Devkota was taken to Ranchi for the treatment. Mrigendra Shumsher and Brahma Shumsher JBR had provided all the expenses for Devkota’s treatment in Ranchi.

Finally, Devkota was taken to Ranchi and he was admitted to the Ranchi Nursing Home on January 4, 1939. After he was admitted to the hospital, Lt. Col. Dr. Berkley Hill with the intention to please Devkota had said to the people who had taken Devkota there, “It seems you people should be kept here instead of him.” Madhusudan Devkota had later said this particular fact to his sister’s son Keshav Chandra Gautam. Devkota stayed at the Ranchi Nursing House for 155 days till June 4, 1939. The doctor who treated Devkota at that time was American Psychiatrist Dr. Berkley Hill. Dr. Hill was a well known psychiatrist and represented the seventh place among psychiatrists of the world. Admitting Devkota was a sage, he had said to him respectfully, “A man like Devkota shouldn’t have been born in Nepal. Because he is born in a country like Nepal, he is counted among the mad. It is a ‘geographical mistake’ for him to be born in Nepal.”

The person who accompanied Devkota to Ranchi was his fourth brother Madhusudan Devkota. After some time, his fifth brother Mitranath Devkota also reached Ranchi to look after him. According to Devkota's younger brother, Devkota once ran away with one kilogram of tomatoes; however he came back in the evening.

Devkota came to Birganj on his way to Kathmandu from Ranchi. Then, they stayed at Keshav Raj Pindali's rented room. At that time, Pindali was a wireless operator in Birganj. Pindali and Devkota were relatives; Devkota's wife Mana Devi was daughter of Pindali's maternal uncle. In addition, Devkota and Pindali had cordial relationship. Pindali was the brother-in-law of Devkota who was close to him. Therefore, on meeting Pindali in Birganj, Devkota had opened his heart to Pindali, "I had gone to cure my mental illness in Ranchi, I returned cured." At that time, Devkota had given Pindali a non-stop lecture on hell to heaven and sin to virtue. According to Pindali's wife, Devkota had stayed there for one week. At that time, there was a huge crowd at Pindali's place to see Devkota. He continued his poetic journey in Birganj too. There, he thought that he was free from mental tension. Therefore, after returning to Kathmandu, he visited homes of his near and dear ones and used to say with pride, "I've returned completely cured from Ranchi!"

Devkota was not that happy with the fact that he was taken to Ranchi. He had said to Janak Lal Sharma about this, "Nephew, I'm not a lunatic. I'm poor." Devkota had further said to Sharma, "Do you know, I was in financial trouble at that time? I felt inferiority complex everywhere. I considered myself the smallest being in the world. For me, others were great mountains. Because of financial situation, my wishes were never fulfilled. At that time, nobody

understood the feeling of my heart. I used to stay in one place the whole day thinking about all these matters. Therefore, without proper understanding, they took me to Ranchi thinking I had become mad.” If we accept the fact mentioned by Devkota in his poem 'Lunatic', Devkota was once tethered in a small log of wood as a part of punishment, which kept him motionless.

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Devkota was physically fit; however, he had mental imbalance. For example, his younger brother Madhusudan Devkota had said to Bhawani Bhikchu in 1940, “My brother’s mental condition is not sound.” After that, Bhikchu had put his curiosity before Devkota, “Dear poet! I hear you are ill. Now what is your ailment?” In reply to that Devkota had said, “Sometimes the thunderbolt enters into my brain. I get an urge to crush the entire world to pieces. But the world is very much stronger than me, very very tough, what to do?” In course of introducing himself to Devkota, once Madan Mani Dixit had gone to meet Devkota in the year 1948. Devkota said to Dixit, “Madan Mani, do you want to become a sheep?” In reply, Dixit said, “I don’t even like the meat of the sheep.” After that Devkota again said, “Don’t eat the meat of a sheep, but become a sheep; all will eat your meat. I feel like becoming a sheep these days.” Devkota had written the poem ‘*God! Make me a Sheep!*’ a few days before meeting Dixit.

Devkota’s behavior was very imbalanced when he went to Kolkata in 1948. Devkota stayed at the rented room of Ram Hari Joshi and Jaya Narayan Giri at the slum castle of Kolkata’s Park Circus. Joshi used to sleep on the floor giving his bed to Devkota. Among those who used to sleep on the floor along with Joshi were Ishwar Baral, Jaya Narayan Giri

and Narayan Prasad Bhattarai. One night, when all of them were sleeping, Devkota all of a sudden got up with a jerk and proceeded towards the window in search of something. And, from that three story building, he tried to jump down from the window. Baral and Bhattarai woke up and put back Devkota in the bed. Devkota expressed sadness over the situation and said, “I want to see God. I want to die.” After that, he started to punch on his head continuously and ultimately fell on the bed after some time. The very next morning he appeared normal again as usual.

During his stay in Kolkata, he used to be lonely and lost in his own thoughts. Whether sitting at the ceremony or in a tram he used to babble in English with twinkling eyes. When he used to be amidst people, he appeared as if he was lost in thoughts. According to Ram Hari Joshi, his eldest brother-in-law reached Kolkata at that time. Devkota bowed on the feet of his brother-in-law and started to cry loudly. Recalling his deceased son Krishna Prasad, he had said, “My Krishna is dead, I’m a great culprit, I couldn’t cure my son.” According to Devkota’s younger brother Madhusudan, when Devkota used to start weeping, he used to keep on weeping and used to continue crying for four-five hours.

During Devkota’s stay in Kolkata, Ram Hari Joshi and Devendra Raj Upadhyaya had to struggle very hard to take care of him. They used to be usually afraid that he would run away, get lost, and fall over. Therefore, when they had to go out, they used to give Devkota a register to make him busy so that he could engage himself in writing poems. They used to leave Devkota alone inside the room and lock up the door and then get out for their respective work.

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The 'Aajkal' Hindi Literary Monthly published *Bishwadarshan*, an issue dedicated to poems on the occasion of the 93rd remembrance day of the Great Poet of India Rabindranath Tagore on May 6, 1953. In that issue, Rahul Sankrityayan wrote an article under the title *The Nepali Great Poet Devkota*. As per Ishwar Baral, it was a non-Nepali poet Rahul Sankrityayan who gave Devkota the honor 'The Great Poet'. The respected personality of the Indian Literature Sankrityayan was the first foreigner who had given Devkota an international fame and had contributed to develop the Nepali literature.

Janak Lal Sharma handed over the 'Aajkal' magazine in Devkota's hand. When Devkota came to know about *Mahapandit* Rahul Sankrityayan's writings in that magazine about his stay at the lunatic asylum of Ranchi, it became unbearable to him. He grew angry with Janak Lal Sharma whom he used to call his nephew. Because, he thought that this news was exposed to Sankrityayan by Sharma. Janak Lal Sharma was familiar with Devkota's wrath. Devkota used to tremble when he got angry. His eyes and ears used to be red. There would be sweating on his nose. His cheek used to get red when he was in rage. People used to get frightened to see Devkota in anger. Sharma has written on this context, "He's an eccentric. What unfortunate accident he'd cause?"

Devkota had written the poem 'The Lunatic' the night he read the article written by Rahul Sankrityayan about him. Addressing Janak Lal Sharma as 'You' he had written "Your *Mahapandit* Rahul My Fool" in that poem. However, Sharma convinced Devkota to omit the word 'Rahul' from the poem.

Devkota wrote 'The Lunatic' seeing his own life. He wrote 'Lunatic', being unable to tolerate the injustice done to him. Moreover, he wrote 'The Lunatic' displaying his own

critical conditions. He expressed in his poem 'The Lunatic', all the details on the oppressive behavior of men which made him to live in that condition.

Devkota's poem 'The Lunatic' created a new wave in the field of Nepali poetry. In addition, the poem was established as his representative poem. He often used to recite that poem in the canteen of the Advisory Council at that time. His friends used to gather around him when he used to be in canteen of the Council. Therefore, the Council used to have low representatives. Not only that, he carried the poem 'The Lunatic' with himself for months and whenever, wherever he met few people in one place, he used to read that poem there. Dan Khaling, at that time, reported that Devkota often used to find the listeners of his poem at tea shops. Kumar Bahadur Joshi has written about this poem, “‘The Lunatic' is actually the highest level of creation, a dominant prose-poetry and this creation of Devkota was inspired by the allegation of lunacy. The poem is a poetic attempt, prepared under the circumstances of the events in which his acquaintances, literary friends and the people in political field had shown disregard to him. Considering him a lunatic, they had taken benefits from him when they needed him; but in times of reaping the benefits, they had not even thought of him. The poet, as if he had accepted the allegation of madness, has actually satirized the society and has proved it mad and has tried to prove himself fit and sane.”

Devkota's poem 'The Lunatic' was first published in *Pragati* a bi-monthly literary collection, in the month September-October, 1953. He liked this poem very much. Therefore, he edited the poem three times. During the course of editing, he omitted some words and sentences from the original one and added some new words and sentences to it:

Lunatic

1.

*Oh yes, friend! I'm crazy-
that's just the way I am.*

2.

*I see sounds,
I hear sights,
I taste smells,
I touch not heaven but things from the underworld,
things people do not believe exist,
whose shapes the world does not suspect.
Stones I see as flowers
lying water-smoothed by the water's edge,
rocks of tender forms
in the moonlight
when the heavenly sorceress smiles at me,
putting out leaves, softening, glistening,
throbbing, they rise up like mute maniacs,
like flowers, a kind of moon-bird's flowers.
I talk to them the way they talk to me,
a language, friend,
that can't be written or printed or spoken,
can't be understood, can't be heard.
Their language comes in ripples to the moonlit Ganges banks,
ripple by ripple-
oh yes, friend! I'm crazy-
that's just the way I am.*

3.

*You're clever, quick with words,
your exact equations are right forever and ever.
But in my arithmetic, take one from one-
and there's still one left.
You get along with five senses,
I with a sixth.
You have a brain, friend,
I have a heart.
A rose is just a rose to you-
to me it's Helen and Padmini.*

*You are forceful prose
I liquid verse.
When you freeze I melt,
When you're clear I get muddled
and then it works the other way around.
Your world is solid,
mine vapor,
yours coarse, mine subtle.
You think a stone reality;
harsh cruelty is real for you.
I try to catch a dream,
the way you grasp the rounded truth of cold, sweet coin.
I have the sharpness of the thorn,
you of gold and diamonds.
You think the hills are mute-
I call them eloquent.
Oh yes, friend!
I'm free in my inebriation-
that's just the way I am.*

4.
*In the cold of the month of Magh
I sat
warming to the first white heat of the star.
the world called me drifty.
When they saw me staring blankly for seven days
after I came back from the burning ghats
they said I was a spook.
When I saw the first marks of the snows of time
in a beautiful woman's hair
I wept for three days.
When the Buddha touched my soul
they said I was raving.
They called me a lunatic because I danced
when I heard the first spring cuckoo.
One dead-quiet moon night
breathless I leapt to my feet,
filled with the pain of destruction.
On that occasion the fools
put me in the stocks,*

*One day I sang with the storm-
the wise men
sent me off to Ranchi.
Realizing that same day I myself would die
I stretched out on my bed.
A friend came along and pinched me hard
and said, Hey, madman,
your flesh isn't dead yet!
For years these things went on.
I'm crazy, friend-
that's just the way I am.*

5.
*I called the Navab's wine blood,
the painted whore a corpse,
and the king a pauper.
I attacked Alexander with insults,
and denounced the so-called great souls.
The lowly I have raised on the bridge of praise
to the seventh heaven.
Your learned pandit is my great fool,
your heaven my hell,
your gold my iron,
friend! Your piety my sin.
Where you see yourself as brilliant
I find you a dolt.
Your rise, friend-my decline.
That's the way our values are mixed up,
friend!
Your whole world is a hair to me.
Oh yes, friend, I'm moonstruck through and through-
moonstruck!
That's just the way I am.*

6.
*I see the blind man as the people's guide,
the ascetic in his cave a deserter;
those who act in the theater of lies
I see as dark buffoons.
Those who fail I find successful,*

*and progress only backsliding.
am I squint-eyed,
Or just crazy?
Friend, I'm crazy.
Look at the withered tongues of shameless leaders,
The dance of the whores
At breaking the backbone on the people's rights.
When the sparrow-headed newsprint spreads its black lies
In a web of falsehood
To challenge Reason-the hero in myself-
My cheeks turn red, friend,
red as molten coal.
When simple people drink dark poison with their ears
Thinking it nectar-
and right before my eyes, friend!-
then every hair on my body stands up stiff
as the Gorgon's serpent hair-
every hair on me maddened!
When I see the tiger daring to eat the deer, friend,
or the big fish the little,
then into my rotten bones there comes
the terrible strength of the soul of Dadhichi
and tries to speak, friend,
like the stormy day crashing down from heaven with the lightning.
When man regards a man
as not a man, friend,
then my teeth grind together, all thirty-two,
top and bottom jaws,
like the teeth of Bhimasena.
And then
red with rage my eyeballs roll
round and round, with one sweep
like a lashing flame
taking in this inhuman human world.
My organs leap out of their frames-
Uproar! Uproar!
my breathing becomes a storm,
my face distorted, my brain on fire, friend!
with a fire like those that burn beneath the sea,
like the fire that devours the forests,*

*frenzied, friend!
as one who would swallow the wide world raw.
Oh yes, my friend,
the beautiful chakora am I,
destroyer of the ugly,
both tender and cruel,
the bird that steals the heaven's fire,
child of the tempest,
spew of the insane volcano,
terror incarnate.
Oh yes, friend,
my brain is whirling, whirling-
that's just the way I am.*

• Translated by Laxmi Prasad Devkota

The treatment of Devkota in Ranchi did not provide him a permanent improvement in his mental health condition. Devkota's relatives too suffered from the instability in his behavior. Devkota's thoughts and behavior often used to be in an abnormal condition. In the words of Basanta Lohani, "Generally speaking, Devkota was mad in one sense. However, he has an extraordinary thinking as well as behavior. The ordinary people were greatly impressed from Devkota's amazing and extraordinary thinking and creation." Therefore, his family was even more compelled to think about him. And, his elder brother Lekhnath took him to Gosaikunda, a famous pilgrimage site of Kathmandu. The way to Gosaikunda was a steep climb. Devkota, faced a great difficulty to reach Gosaikunda. But even in Gosaikunda, he could not find any change in his condition and they returned home. In this connection, he was taken to Sitapaila, Tokha and Sankhu, Bajrayogini. He could not get mental satisfaction even with the change of environment at different places. Even in such a state, Devkota continued to contribute worthy creations. His creations ultimately established him as an incomparable creator of the time.

The Great Poet Devkota, though had lived on this earth physically, most of the time his mind used to be in a different world. Devkota had become a source of creation of distinguished literary works. But, his family, the society and the country could not properly take care of him. Devkota did not receive proper evaluation of his extraordinary talent from the common people. It is very sad that an exceptional, extraordinary and astounding poet of the Nepali literature was given the title of a maniac.

Devkota's Academic Journey

The Great Poet Devkota used to write poems from his early childhood. In the beginning, he wrote poems in Nepali. He sketched some lines in Sanskrit language as well. Once, he wrote a poem in Sanskrit based on the *Bhagavad Gita* and showed it to his father Tilamadhav Devkota. His father had a glimpse on it and threw it away, saying that it was incorrect and worthless. He was scolded that he could not write any poetic lines in Sanskrit. From that day, he gave up his wish to write poems in Sanskrit. After that, he continuously started to write poems only in the Nepali language. Devkota, influenced by the poems written by his father and Lekhnath Paudyal, had gathered the inspiration to write poems in his childhood. As he grew up, he was influenced by English poets Wordsworth and Shelly.

Writings were Devkota's favorite pastime and writing poems became his daily routine. Due to his one-sided nature, he used to get lost in his own world. He also wrote on this context, "If I hadn't developed the habit of writing, I would've been good for nothing like an ass." Whatever he spoke, he spoke from his heart, and whatever he wrote, he wrote from his mind.

Devkota was exceptionally gifted in the field of writing poetry. He had the highest level of confidence in writing. He had said about poetry writing, "I can talk in couplets, and

can babble in couplets all day long.” He established himself as a writer of special quality in the field of poetry writing in the Nepali literature. It became possible due to the fact that he had both talent and dedication. Devkota was in himself a different and special epic which could not be written by anyone. In the words of Chaitanya, a critic, “Devkota is a great personality in the field of the literary world.” Jagadish Ghimire, litterateur says, “Devkota was a unique literary ladder who contributed to upgrade the level of poetry, which was in infant stage, to the present era of excellence.”

When Devkota was studying at the Durbar High School, he used to read his poems before his friends. At that time, he sometimes used to read Nepali poems and at other times he used to read English poems. His schoolmates often did not believe that Devkota himself had written those poems. Some of his friends remarked, “Laxmi Prasad brings those poems to school which were written by his elder brother Lekhnath Devkota. Moreover, he reads those poems as if it was written by himself. Devkota is a person pretending to be wealthy in borrowed clothes; he is an artificial peacock.” In spite of his friends’ saying, he did not stop reading poems among his friends. Nevertheless, his friends were not ready to call him a poet. One day, all his schoolmates took an exam of writing poetry to humiliate him. And the title of the poem was chosen then and there. The title of the poem was Durbar School. He wrote the poem within fifteen minutes. He read the poem to all the students present there. The news about this event spread everywhere in the school. Moreover, the teachers of the school too wanted to listen to that poem. The teachers of Durbar School honored him with the title of ‘A Budding Poet’. In his school life, Devkota had started writing poems, considering Pinaki Prasad Acharya as his ‘Guru’ of poetry writing. He used to read the poems before Acharya.

Devkota had started to pay special attention to reading the works of English writers immediately after he passed matriculation. He had read the works of Wordsworth, Shelly, Shakespeare, Byron and Matthew Arnold. During the time he was studying Intermediate of Science, he had written *The Ballad: Savitri and Satyawan*. Later on, he used that poem in the context of his play *Savitri Satyawan*. When he was studying in Tri-Chandra College, he had written a poem which was published in the 'Gorkhapatra' a daily newspaper. He had written that poem under the name *Laxmi, T C College, Nepal*. The title of the poem of sixteen metrical verse sets was *Basanta Sodashi*, a poem on the description of the season of the spring. That poem published in two slots, eight verses on April 30, 1928 and the rest on May 7, 1928, can be taken as the first formal poem marking the threshold of romanticism in Devkota's writing.

Devkota published a poem entitled *Purnima Ko Jaladhi* under his own formal name in 'Gorkhapatra' daily in December 1934. His poem entitled 'The Poor' was published in the first issue of 'Sharada' of March 1935. In view of the relationship that was prevalent during those days between Devkota and 'Sharada' in the Nepali literature, Choodamani Bandhu had written, "To say *yug*, the time of 'Sharada' and *yug*, the time of Devkota is the same thing."

Devkota was deeply shocked by the death of his professor Sharada Prasad Mukherjee. He wrote the agony of his tutor in the English language. After that, he slowly appeared formally in English literature writing as well.

Devkota wrote poems from his early age. He wrote a poem affected by the pain of his eldest sister-in-law Som Kumari, Lekhanath Devkota's eldest wife. When he showed the poem written by him 'I have become unfortunate' to his

sister-in-law Som Kumari, he was not even ten years old. And that same poem reached the hand of his father Tilamadhav Devkota. After getting the pat of encouragement from his father for writing that poem, he wrote another poem. Devkota's eldest brother Lekhnath had married his second wife in spite of the presence of the first one, the eldest sister-in-law who was Devkota's beloved one. Devkota shocked by this incident had expressed his feelings:

*Terrible ocean of pain is this world, know my brother
Never be proud since we have to die.*

Devkota had studied in his childhood *The Amarkosh* and the epic *Raghubansha* written in the Sanskrit language and other different poems by Lekhnath Paudyal written in Nepali.

Devkota had a very sentimental personality with a profound creative quality. He not only respected Bhanubhakta Acharya, he considered Bhanubhakta as the best of all writers in Nepali literature. He has written in this subject, "We begin our education by reading Bhanubhakta and end it by neglecting him." In addition, he considered Lekhnath Paudyal his ideal. Balkrishna Sama was a great creator or playwright who used to show a great respect to Devkota. Not only that, the *Guru* who had confidence in Devkota was Lekhnath Paudyal. Devkota used to joke with Sama a lot. In this context, one day Devkota said to Sama, "I can write against your *Ranas*' rule. You won't know what I have written." Satirizing the *Rana* regime, he had written *Lute Kukur* (The Stray Dog).

Devkota was also called the 'lightening' in the field of 'the art of writing'. He himself has accepted this fact, "There're few people who have given me the title of an 'electric poet' as if only the switch has to be pressed, and my

heart would play like the record of phone and it would emit the music poem, only the poem. There is rumor among the general public that I am the pandit, scholar of the Sanskrit and English language, and I am perfectly conversant in nine languages.” While studying in Banaras the ‘electric poet’ had written four hundred couplets, which was seen by Narendra Regmi himself. In fact, Devkota was a brilliant star in the sky of Nepali literature. In the words of litterateur Krishna Prasad Parajuli, “The Great Poet Devkota was the only star of the Nepali literature.”

When Juddha Shumsher gained the title of the *Shree-teen Maharaja*, Devkota wrote poems praising him. At that time, he had written the hymn of praise in both the Nepali and English languages. He presented that poem to Juddha Shumsher and received one thousand rupees as an award from him. When Chandra Shumsher became the *Shree-teen Maharaja*, he had written a poem in praise of him as well. In addition, when Padma Shumsher became the *Shree-teen Maharaja*, he wrote the Royal edict of Padma Shumsher in nine languages. He never denied anybody who told him, “Please write this, *baje*.” In fact, he was an extensive creator; many people climbed on his back to get benefit from him.

Devkota was the great pandit, scholar of Nepali literature. The continuous journey of Devkota in the field of Nepali language and literature, which stayed for four decades, made Nepali language a very popular and famous among the Nepali people. Actually, it is believed that Nepali literature became very rich and flourished due to his hard labor. There is no writer as popular in the Nepali literature as him. He was a miracle writer of the Nepali literature. Many have sung songs about him. Among those who had enjoyed and praised his writings was the *Rastra Kavi* (national poet) Madhav Ghimire. He also pleaded about the writings of Devkota, “It

was Devkota himself who presented beauty as the luminous cover of truth and truth as the beauty of soul.” Writing about the high quality creations of Devkota, Dr. Mod Nath Prashrit has also said, “Devkota is the greatest genius of the world of the Twentieth Century –there is no different view about it and it won’t be an exaggeration to say he is the eminent genius of his time.” Dr. Prashrit gave an additional conclusion on him, “Devkota is the Veda Vyas, ancient sage Vyas who systematized the Veda of modern thought.”

It was five days after he joined the editorial board of the ‘Yugavani’ in Banaras that Nathuram Godse assassinated Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948. Devkota cried when he heard the news and he published his writing on Gandhi in ‘Yugavani’. At that time, he had said about Gandhi that he was the confluence of Krishna, Rama and the Buddha.

When Devkota was living in Banaras, he came in contact with pandit Tikadatta Dhital, the elder brother-in-law of Prof. Mohan Raj Sharma. Dhital who hailed from Okhaldhunga had the Nepali Language Publication ‘Nepali Shaubhagya Pustakalaya’ in Banaras. Ishwar Baral had established Devkota’s relationship with Dhital the owner of the Library. Ishwar Baral has written about the marvelous writings of Devkota, “When Devkota was living in Kashi and was involved in politics, he had desperate scarcity of financial means. With the intention that he could be of help in alleviating Devkota’s financial crisis, one day the writer took Devkota to the place of a local Nepali Publisher Tikadatta Dhital. That publisher tried to help Devkota promising him that he’d give him four *annas* (25 paisa) for each line with the purpose of making Devkota write a book of nearly 125 stanzas in each relish of line.” On the very next day, Devkota went to the publisher in the early morning with his writings of 125 stanzas. That day, the publisher

happily gave him the money for that. The next day, when Devkota went to the publisher with another additional relish of stanzas, he had some difficulty in giving the payment for that. The third day, when Devkota reached his place with the third piece of his writings the publisher had a great difficulty. The fourth day, when Devkota went to the publisher with his fourth writings, the publisher showing his financial inability to pay, stated Devkota that he couldn't pay in that speed."

In view of pandit Tikadatta Dhital's help to Devkota in Banaras at that time, Devkota had written a letter to Dhital on September 19, 1955 :

When I was in misery in Banaras, you had shown love and respect to me by helping me; I would consider myself always indebted to you.

I have collected poems, essays and the collection of stories and I have thought of publishing them. I would write to you later.

I want to write literary works again; if I could present new things to you, I'd be very glad.

*Yours always,
Laxmi Prasad Devkota*

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During the time Devkota was in the Himanchal Student's Association, he had written some sonnets in the English language with the title *Baapu* in honor of Mahatma Gandhi. That writing was taken there as a surprise and everybody praised that series of poetry. The manuscript of that poem reached Professor Dr. Kalidasa Naga of Kolkata University. Professor Naga was the main companion who travelled the world with Rabindranath Tagore. Upon the request of Prof. Naga, the famous poet Latika Ghosh of

Kolkata also studied every alphabet of *Baapu* written by Devkota. Ghosh was the granddaughter of Arbind Ghosh the great saint of Pondicherry. She was a well-known writer in Kolkata. She was brought up and educated in Britain. After reading that sonnet of Devkota, she had said, “Everybody can’t write such a worthy poem. The writer of this poem must be extraordinary.”

Devkota himself was a guide of literature. He was a person who could leave a deep imprint on poetry and the poet. He was the symbol of consciousness in the field of poetry. He was a source of inspiration in the field of poem. The writing of poems was the rhythm of his breathing. He used to suffocate when he could not write. His writings used to be like the whole nature. In addition, he could make nature stand in his writings. Therefore, he used to say, “Why are the poets attracted towards flowers? Poetry can’t be enjoyed in the same sense that the nature becomes more pleasant with the blooming of flowers in the spring. A true poet is the garden of flowers in the spring.” Shakti Lamsal, in course of evaluating his creative contributions, has also said that Devkota was the pinnacle of modern writing. In the words of Lamsal himself, “The beginning of the modern writing in the Nepali literature starts with Laxmi Prasad Devkota.”

The combination of Eastern tradition and Western education represents the academic personality of the Great Poet Devkota. In fact, his writings also show both the Eastern and the Western traditions. On this background, Madhav Ghimire says, “Devkota brought the style of openness and thinking of the West in the Nepali poetry. He established an inter relation between the nature and mind. He introduced the Eastern culture and philosophy of life to the Western World.” In this context, the famous writer of the Russian literature Dr. Lyudmila Aganina has also written, “Devkota’s

genius got praise outside Nepal too. He became famous in the Soviet Union.” Dr. Aganina herself had made a great contribution to make Devkota’s writings more familiar in Russia. She was an Ambassador liaison between the Nepalese and Russian literature. Devkota was greatly influenced and was also happy with Aganina’s extraordinary talent, supportive behavior and openness.

Devkota called free thinking or romantic nature, the *romani* trend. He was the beginner of the *romani* trend of writing in the Nepali literature. Many wrote about his free thinking nature or romantic style. Besides the Western influence, Devkota himself had pleaded about the romantic style or flow of writing. In the literary conference organized in Tashkent of Russia, Devkota had said about himself, “The Western influence is prevalent in the writings of the Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota. He had used the stanzas of the folk-songs in literature and had started the romantic style or flow of writing.”

An in-depth study, explanation, and analysis were carried out in Devkota’s style of openness in writings. In this context, Thakur Parajuli decisively wrote, “Devkota was the first creator of the romantic age in the Nepali literature.” Raj Narayan Pradhan has also written, “Devkota is a great pioneer of the English romantic graceful quality of poetry in the Nepali literature. He alone has used all the romantic possibilities in the Nepali literature.” Similarly, Indra Bilas Adhikari has written comparing Devkota with the American writer of the Eighteenth Century, “Devkota was a romantic poet like William Cullen Bryant. The literary attitude and principle of both these Great Poets were similar. They had believed that nature should be thought of as a living being.” Devkota also contributed some works under the influence of the Western education. To this date, the originality of

nation's folk traditions dominates his creations like *Muna Madan*. *Luni* and *Mahendu* are some of other original coverings of our own folk traditions.

Devkota himself didn't know how much he had written. He didn't remember the whereabouts of his creation. In this context, once he had said to Shankar Lamichhane, "No, I don't know how much I've written, because, seventy five percent of my works got lost. I don't remember clearly about the twenty-five percent." Similarly, he had told Sharadchandra Sharma Bhattarai, "I need the page on which it is not written; I'd give you the pages that are written. If they are left here, my wife could throw them away wiping the excreta." At that time, Bhattarai used to get Devkota's poems published in 'Bharati' magazine. For that reason, he used to take poems from Devkota.

It was Devkota, who took the Nepali literature to the Western world. He presented the strengths of the literature of the Western world in the Nepali literature and also translated them into English. Devkota has changed Nepali literature through the medium of English.

Devkota thought of himself as the poet of the feudal era. He used to say, "The poet who would represent people is the need of the nation and what am I in front of Dharma Raj Thapa and Devi Prasad Kisan!" After Devkota uttered these words, some writers who thought of themselves as the revolutionaries started to say that Devkota is in fact a feudal poet and he's a poet who could do nothing to the public. But, they understood that Devkota had satirized them when they fell into the ditch of unpopularity for browbeating against Devkota.

Devkota had command over fourteen languages. He wrote poems in Sanskrit, Nepali, Newari, English, Hindi,

Bengali, Urdu, French, German, and Russian languages. His poems written in nine languages were published for public in 'Sharada' monthly also. He not only used to write but also used to enjoy reading his creations before others. In this context, former Prime Minister Kirti Nidhi Bista also said, "Devkota and my house were near to each other. Therefore, I often used to go to his house. It is because he was also my English teacher in the college. He used to read out his poems upon meeting me. What I found about him at that time was that he probably didn't even realize, to whom he was telling the poem. He used to read his poems enthusiastically and with a great effort, thinking that he was telling them to a big mass, even when he was reading it to a person."

The speed of Devkota's writing was like that of a cascading waterfall. He did not use to feel tired of writing. Those who used to come in contact with him also used to praise his writings open-heartedly. In this context, Madhav Ghimire told his experience, "Whereas I was very slow in writing, Devkota was very quick." While they used to be together, Balkrishna Sama used to say, "One bird only scratches the ground, another bird flies with speed and vanishes."

Devkota was a great source of ever emerging consciousness. His nature was like that of a saint; but, there used to be a revolt of creation in his heart. In addition to that, he used to believe on his friends too much. Believing his friends, he had even gone to Banaras to announce the people's revolt in 1948. The 'Yugavani' edited by him and the *Pahadi Pukar* written by him, however, represented an announcement of revolution. At that time, he stayed in Banaras for nearly twenty-six months and he was completely devoted to writings.

Devkota who represents the conscious poets of that era was completely dedicated to the development and betterment of the Nepali language and literature. In fact, the creations of this single person Devkota sufficed to represent an era. His speed and free-flow style of writings established an eternal consciousness within that era. Therefore, Narahari Acharya, a politician as well as a literary person gave a decisive view on his domination during the era, “The Great Poet Devkota is a single promoter of the era of the Nepali literature.”

Devkota never said he was tired of writing. In fact, there was no limit in his writing. So, he never used to be satisfied with whatever amount he used to write. He preferred to write sitting on his knees in the bed on the floor rather than sitting on table and chairs. In this context, his sister’s daughter Sashi Rimal, litterateur said, “I used to visit my uncle’s house on festivals and on the occasion of observing religious rituals. I used to find him sitting and writing on the *garuda*, sitting cross-legged in meditating posture.” In addition, while writing he used to be eager to recite his poem to one who used to be sitting near him.

Devkota rarely had a free time; he used to start writing as soon as he had leisure. But, one used to see the written papers scattered everywhere. His writings could be found everywhere from his bed to the kitchen and from upper terrace to the courtyard. The pockets of his shirt and coat used to be filled with papers with poems he had written. In this context, Basudev Sharma Luitel, litterateur, had told about an event related to Devkota’s works, “Once, Devkota was drinking water in the *dhunge dhara* (water spout). While he was busy in drinking water, I took out a piece of poem from his pocket without his knowledge. I published that poem which was entitled *Swagatam* in my own name in the ‘Gorkhapatra’ a

daily newspaper. I stole his poems only keeping him in confidence, feeding him boiled potatoes. But, Devkota used to have a stock of such poems and those who used to offer him meat and rice, used to steal them and publish in their own name. I know those people.” Sacks of his writings are still in unused and unpublished condition at *Kavi Kunj*.

One can't exactly guess how much Devkota had written. All the manuscripts of his writings, however, would fill tens of sacks. In this context, he told Khanuprude 'Rambabu', "I served the Nepali language as much as I could. So far as my several books, articles and poems are concerned, many were lost; some took them saying that they'd publish them; but, they neither published them nor returned them to me." In fact, Devkota's creations used to be unique. The blank sides of the packets of 'Fulmar' cigarette, scattered all over his room, also used to be filled with his poems. No one could find a single blank paper in his house. The blank papers used to be filled with his poems. If he could not find a paper, he used even to write poems on the walls of his house. But he never rewrote again, and never corrected his writings. Still, he was very good at studies too. In this context, he had said to Indra Bahadur Rai, "I study eight hours and write an hour." According to Baishnav, "Devkota used to study a book of 60 pages within an hour."

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Devkota was a water deity on the seas of poetry. He never used to feel fully satisfied with reading his creations, which in one sense could not quench his thirst. At the time of reading out the poems, or doing anything, it was with poetry he worked and walked. He respected both the young and the old equally. He used to tell his poems to all who were interested. He had an equal interest and dedication in

writing poems and telling them to others. Devkota and poetry are synonymous.

When Rahul Sankrityayan was in Nepal in 1953, Devkota on the spot had translated his poems written in Nepali into English and read them out before him. He had also read out the epic *Sanyogita* written by him in English to Sankrityayan. Sankrityayan was greatly influenced by the continuous and free flow style of writing and reading of Devkota. He used to believe Devkota as a next wonder to the wonders of this world. In view of this context, Taranath Sharma has written, “Our Laxmi Prasad Devkota is similar to the great-grandson of the Kalidasa, the grandson of Wordsworth, the son of Shelly, and the nephew of Keats. He has become a conscious creator, effective critique and revolutionary artist of modern era with all his dedicated efforts, with mind and body in the service of literature. Devkota has opened a broad scope and headway in the field of modern prose and poetry by providing the Nepali language a vision with modernity, making it strong with logical ideas and even making it alive and worthy by providing a style of writing that is as the speed of a free flowing and roaring river.”

Devkota is also known as the poet who always stood in favor of nature. He was peace loving, a leading supporter of universalism, and a writer on humanitarianism. Therefore, it is said that to weigh him under the boarder-line of any thought or ism or philosophy would be to do injustice to him. Yes, he was a unique personality of the multi-dimensional style of writing. His writing has still not been truly evaluated. Neither can we weigh this great genius in a smaller weighing machine. But, many critics who evaluated him have said that he was close to the *sankhya darshan* (one of the six schools of Hindu Philosophy propagated by the sage Kapil). Nitya Raj Pandey, litterateur, has written in this context, “Though the poet hasn’t

used the word *sankhya*, the sentiment of the poet is present in it. The *sankhya* is a statistical science driven by philosophy among the philosophies established by the holymen. This philosophy is considered prominent among all the philosophies, because, it has taken new interpretations and principles. It is infallible for peace. The main aim of Devkota was to take a peace-loving path, staying in the background of nature. The base of Devkota's idea is founded on his philosophy, because, the poet has a very undeniable wish in his heart to promote the path of peace and it's clear that it has left strong impression on his poetry.”

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Devkota wrote covering almost all the aspects of the Nepali language and literature. He gave importance to all genres of literature, be it child-literature or the epic. Epic, shorter epic, song, essays, composition, novel, play, story—whatever he wrote, most of them were popular. Prof. Rajendra Subedi has opined to the public about these specialties of Devkota, “The relativity of the present time has erected him as a towering personality.” He was established as the great creator on the earth because of the perfection of his work.

Devkota was thinking about creating a new language within Nepal. In that process, he was preparing a dictionary in 1956. He called that language the *voral vakka*. And that was his universal language. He had told Madhav Ghimire about it, “It'd be more or less a great effort.” He had also told about it to Shyam Das Baishnav, “I've to connect the Eastern and Western languages.”

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In the Nepali literature after Bhanubhakta, Devkota represents a personality who is well known to all. As said by

Ghat Raj Bhattarai “An era of Nepali literature rises with Devkota and sets with Devkota.” Thus, Devkota is a miraculous era in the Nepali literature. He lives in the heartbeat of the Nepalese. He is the long-living great man of the Nepali language and literature. Devkota has been worshipped by the Nepalese with the feelings of Devkota’s own words, “In literature, the best one is the one who resides in the heartbeat of the nation.” Devkota himself was a miracle and had a unique personality. It is very difficult to find someone of his height. *Ganesh kavi* Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav always regarded him as a *Messenger of God* .

Devkota's Literary Works

Great Poet Devkota's calligraphic presentation was very attractive. He could write in ten different languages in beautiful handwriting. His handwriting was small yet very clean and tempting. Not alone the fact that his letters are so fine, his books preserved simplicity and gravity in forms and contents as well. As a writer he was popular as he could write in tune with the interest of the readers. He used to say "I write three types of work for three different readers— 1. profound; for the scholars, 2. medium; for the educated, and 3. simple; for general people to understand. *Muna Madan* is in the second category whereas the *Shakuntal* is in the first."

His literary works were written just once, he often didn't rewrite. That's why most of his works are not polished. According to Ishwar Baral, "Devkota never paid attention to make correction to his incomplete works and not a single work appeared after correction by him till date. That was visible in his work as there were many random repetitions and lack of substantial harmony in writings. Sometimes there were nonsense references as well. There is however plenty of sweetness of his own type in Devkota's style."

The master playwright and great scholar Balkrishna Sama praised Devkota from his heart. He has written on him,

"... Devkota is greater than all of his works. It is injustice on him if his genius is limited to the boundary of his books. He was born three times; with *Muna Madan*, with the *Shakuntal* and with *Pagal...*" Sama had perpetuated writing about Devkota. Additionally, he remarked that Devkota had an immense light of poetry. He always kindled his heart in eagerness with poems, ever ready to spring out.

Devkota's creative horizon was vast. That's why there has never been any shortage of admirers of his greatness. He was a great source of creation in all aspects. Standing on the same premise, Ghana Shyam Nepal opined, "Great poet Devkota is not the name of any race, caste and community of any specific group, it is a collective name of the whole Nepalese society; he is a collective voice and ideal of all deprived, downtrodden, *dalits* and the suppressed groups. His name is the appellation of the voice, of democratic humanitarian faith and appeal, against feudal and tyrannical regime. He is the name of that vision which could see and let others see— extraordinary in ordinary, infinity in finite, universe in atom and atom in universe; he is the name of that name which is compatible with the name of that superpower in nature which consumes rough leaves and produces soft, fine and valuable silk."

Devkota was a great source of poetry. He composed poetry more than he spent time in creating other genres. According to Indra Bahadur Rai regarding the subject of his poetic personality, "Devkota was a personality walking with a huge volcanic pile full of poems. When it erupted within himself, hot lava of poems would rise high to the apex."

Devkota has written books in different genres. According to Siddhicharan Shrestha, Devkota had written "Nepali Ved". Many of his works were posthumously

published as compared to those published during his lifetime. Some of his missing works are yet to be found. The works of Devkota as discovered till date have been listed as follows:

Genre of Poetry: Semi – Epic

1. *Samarpan* (1932)
2. *Muna Madan* (1935)
3. *Rajkumar Pravakar* (1941)
4. *Kunjini* (1945)
5. *Pahadi Pukar* (1948)
6. *Nala* (1948)
7. *Aansu* (1949)
8. *Basanti* (1952)
9. *Sitaharan* (1957)
10. *Rawana Jatayu Yuddha* (1958)
11. *Mhendu* (1958)
12. *Na'ya Satyakali Sambad* (1962)
13. *Luni* (1966)
14. *Mayavini Sarsi*(1967)
15. *Bhyagur Narayan* (1967)
16. *Nasamajhko Gantho* (1967)
17. *Ghodachadee* (1967)
18. *Dushyant Shakuntala Bhet* (1968)
19. *Shringar Ras* (1968)
20. *Shanta Ras* (1968)
21. *Bibhatsa Ras* (1968)
22. *Bhayanak Ras* (1968)
23. *Veer Ras*(1968)
24. *Hasya Ras* (1968)
25. *Adbhut Ras* (1968)
26. *Karun Ras* (1968)
27. *Katak* (1969)
28. *Maina* (1983)

29. *Basanti* (1983). This is different from the previously mentioned.
30. *Srijamata* (1983)
31. *Nepali Meghadoot* (1983)
32. *Bairagyalahari* (1983)
33. *Anandashatak* (1983)
34. *Jhanjha Barnan* (1983)
35. *Tiplingi* (2000)
36. *Tusharabarnan* (2002)

Genre of Poetry: Epic

37. *Nepali Shakuntal* (1945)
38. *Sulochana* (1946)
39. *Maharana Pratap* (1967)
40. *Banakusum* (1968)
41. *Prometheus* (1971)
42. *Prithviraj Chauhan* (1992)

Genre of Poetry: short and long poems and anthologies of poems for children.

43. *Shree Sitaram Padma Vidyashramko Prarthana* (1946)
44. *Ramayana* (1948)
45. *Putali* (1952)
46. *SunkoBihan* (1953)
47. *Bhikhari* (1953)
48. *Janmotsav Mutuko Thopa* (1959)
49. *Chhahara* (1960)
50. *Mrityushaiyyabata* (1960)
51. *Chilla Paatharu* (1964)
52. *GaineGeet* (1967)
53. *Manoranjan* (1967)
54. *Bhawanagangeya* (1967)
55. *Navaras* (1968)
56. *Aakash Bolchha* (1968)

57. *Chhagasanga Kura* (1969)
58. *Laxmi Kavita Sangraha* (1977)
59. *Laxmi Geet Sangraha* (1983)
60. *Mahakavi Devkotaka Kavita* (1991)
61. *Ful Fuleko Baagma* (1997)
62. *SwargakoTukada* (2004)
63. *Pari* (2009)

Poetic Genre: Poetic Play and Drama.

64. *Sabitri Satyawar* (1940)
65. *Krishibaala* (1965)

Essays and Literary Compositions.

66. *Laxmi Nibandha Sangraha* (1945)
67. *Panchatantra* (1981)
68. *Daadimko Rukhanera* (1983)
69. *Nagarik Shastra* (2009)
70. *Mahakavi Devkotaka Nibandha* (2009)

Genre: Story

71. *Laxmi Katha Sangraha* (1976)

Genre: Novel

72. *Champa* (1967)

Genre: Criticism

73. *Srashta Devkota : Drashta Pariveshama* (1985)
74. *Aatmasamikshya* (2006)
75. *Mahakavika Bhumika* (2009)

The Realm of English Language

76. *Big Game Shooting In Nepal* (1942)
77. *The Ballad of Luni* (1968)
78. *Angel* (1983)
79. *Shakuntala* (1991)
80. *Bapoo* (1991)

Genre: Translation

81. *Prasiddha Prabandha Sangraha* (1941)
82. *Macbeth* (1969)
83. *The Present* (1959 AD)
84. *The Lunatic and other poems* (2009)

Unpublished works

1. *Sushamalochana* (1943)
2. *Sundarikal* (1943)
3. *Bhakta Prahlad*
4. *Buddhacharitra*
5. *Linlith* (1943)
6. *Bhotko Ladain* (1945)
7. *Gypsy*
8. *Sikandar* (1943)
9. *Samyogita*
10. *Bharatko Itihas*
11. *Ek Mahinama Angreji Padna Lekhna Sikaune*
12. *Bharatmilap*
13. *Moth*
14. *Nirmanako Marga*
15. *Rajpoot Ramani*
16. *Bhitta Ra Sabha*
17. *Food and Sex*
18. *Anam*
19. *Sahitya Chintan*
20. *Usha Aniruddha*
21. *Nibandha Shangraha*
22. *Devkotaka Rajnitik Kathaharu*
23. *Devkotaka Rajnitik Kavitaru*
24. *Devkotaka Rajnitik Nibandharu*
25. *Kaminilai* (1953)
26. *Marubhumi*
27. *Mahakavi Devkotaka Kathaharu*
28. *Mahilasthan* (1952)

There are additional works written by Devkota:

29. *Ghaanska Kura*
30. *Harishchandra*
31. *Bharat Milap*
32. *Aadhunik Ved*
33. *Sister Nivedita*
34. *Radhakrishna Charitra*
35. *Tathagat*
36. *Bijjuko Charitra*
37. *Krishnashtami*
38. *Voral Vakka*
39. *Tara*
40. *Pradarshani*
41. *Kavitakunja*
42. *Swancha*

Apart from the above mentioned books, there are still umpteen number of manuscripts by Devkota which used to be kept in sacks, but, didn't come into public attention. These manuscripts were on drama, essay, poetry and so on.

The great poet Devkota has remained a prolific genius. Even those against his writings have been found referring to his creations quite often. As written by Ganesh Bahadur Prasai, Devkota's writings are both quantitatively and qualitatively rich. He wrote plays, stories and novels, but more importantly he composed essays and flourished the world of poetry through experimentally inscribed epics and other poems. It seems, he was born with poetic tissues and so formed. The rhymes and melody he established in the poetic history of Nepalese literature can't yet be tallied. It is said that he himself misused many pages – he either tore the pages, wiped his face or burned some to spark the cigarette. The published work covers only 20% of his creation. On his missing works, Siddhicharan Shrestha has written, "Before

his visit to Ranchi in 1939, Devkota sent me a bundle of paper in the hands of Keshav Halwaa. It was the bundle of creative writings including plays, essays and poems. Then I put that safely in a rack. I was imprisoned in 1940. My house was cordoned, and the bundle was taken to the Singha Durbar. Nothing was known about what happened to those creations, many in number. Some were given to blaze, some were picked by others and some were thrown away too."

Devkota had also written the biography of George Bernard Shaw. He had honored Dr. Miller on red carpet at the Shanta Bhawan Hospital by offering him two of his audio recorded poems. One poem entitled 'To the God' was composed of 62 lines and the other one titled 'I let my eyes overflow and bear the pain of Prometheus' was composed of 22 lines. Both of these poems were in English. Madhav Ghimire and many other litterateurs were present at that time.

The works of Devkota are proved to have been smash hit in the realm of Nepali literature. Therefore, it wouldn't be wrong to claim that Devkota is synonymous to Nepali literature. It is through his intelligence and works that Devkota is famous in the world. To conclude, Devkota was and will always remain an unprecedented writer in the field of Nepali literature.

Devkota's Journalism

Great Poet Devkota had interest in working in the field of journalism. Devkota wrote editorials in some issues of 'Sharada' from 1944 to 1945. On this topic, Chooda Mani Bandhu has written, "Any student of Devkota with a close look at his style of writing can easily observe Devkota's style of prose in some such editorials." On this subject, Kumar Bahadur Joshi has presented the editorial note written by Devkota himself in his review work in the edition of 'Sharada' no. 3-4, year 10. At that time, Devkota was very dedicated to 'Sharada'. According to Shiva Regmi, Devkota kept on writing introduction on books in 'Sharada'. But, at that time, the reviewer's name was not published in the review.

After the establishment of the literary institution called 'Nepali Literary Council' by Devkota with Hridayachandra Singh Pradhan and Renu Lal Singh in 1946, they managed to publish a literary magazine which was edited by Hridayachandra Singh Pradhan. A monthly magazine called 'Sahityashrot' was also published from that Council. A poetic conference was organized by 'Nepali Literary Council' in 1947. This conference was conducted under the Chairmanship of Devkota. The speech given by Devkota in that ceremony also proved to be the milestone in the history of Nepali literature. 'Sahityashrot' had published that speech with pride.

Devkota was taken to Banaras by Nepali National Congress to realize the dream of people's revolution in Nepal. Congress had taken the responsibility for Devkota's lodging and food in Banaras. Devkota was fully dedicated to his work from the core of his heart in Banaras.

Before Devkota's arrival in Banaras, the posters and press releases of Nepali National Congress were used to be published in the Hindi language. After Devkota was in Banaras, all the materials which used to be published earlier in Hindi language from that place started to be published for the general public in Nepali language. The editor of 'Udaya' Kashi Bahadur Shrestha had written in the 'Udaya' of Oct.-Nov. 1947, "Prof Laxmi Prasad Devkota, B.A, B.L. will be the Chief Editor of 'Yugavani', a weekly paper of Nepali language to be published from Kashi, and Lila Nateshwar Sharma, B.A. alias Ishwar Baral will assume the responsibility of Assistant Editor."

Nepali National Congress intended to offer Devkota a worthy assignment in Banaras. Accordingly, 'Yugavani weekly' was published giving him a prominent role. Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Balchandra Sharma, Narayan Prasad Upadhyaya and Krishna Prasad Upadhyaya (later Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai) were the members of the editorial board of 'Yugavani'. Ishwar Baral had also worked as the Assistant Editor of 'Yugavani' weekly for some time. Irrespective of the involvement of many persons in the editorial board of 'Yugavani', Devkota used to take the burden of all the work. Ishwar Baral used to take the work of editing, formatting and managerial works relating to the magazine.

Devkota got solely and continuously engaged in the work of 'Yugavani'. He never bothered about time when he

used to be involved in the work. And there was nobody to take care of his food and drinks. He had no other sources of income except the financial assistance given by Narendra Regmi occasionally. Subsequently, Regmi also could not 'keep on feeding an elephant'. Devkota started to turn weaker due to his continuous efforts in journalism. As a result, he was confined to bed. Moreover, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Bal Chandra Sharma took their hands off of looking after him. After that, Devkota's condition was like neither of home nor of the footpath.

In search of Devkota, his wife had come to Banaras during the days when Devkota was suffering from illness. His wife was greatly shocked by the condition of Devkota that time. After that, Mana Devi started taking care of Devkota. She took him to the hospital. Mana Devi had begged on roads for Devkota's treatment. She had not known what the Nepali National Congress was at that time. And she had cursed the so-called intellectuals of the place. In fact, Devkota had worked hard for nearly a year and seven months in the work of 'Yugavani'. The financial condition of Devkota was pitiable. Besides, his sister's son Keshav Chandra Gautam saw Devkota's life of reality as a dream. He said about it till very late, "I can't forget the scene of my third uncle sitting on the footpath of Dudh Binayak at Banaras wearing a dirty loincloth. On top of that, he used to beg with people who were known to him saying, "Sir, please give me either *beedi* or cigarette!"

Devkota was fed up with the behavior of the leaders of the Congress. Therefore, he was looking for the opportunity to return to Nepal, thereby becoming free from their inhumanity. Fortunately, his younger brother Madhusudan Devkota had gone to Banaras with the financial and political support of Babar Shumsher to bring Devkota back to Nepal.

After that, Devkota had returned to Nepal and he had even criticized the Nepali Congress.

Devkota's name remained inviolable as the founder Editor of the 'Yugavani' weekly. But, this magazine was not published in Nepali language for a long time. Devkota worked on the editorial board of this magazine from the very beginning of its publication i.e. on January 26, 1948 till the end of 1949. The magazine was also discontinued after Devkota took off his hand from the work.

In 1952, Devkota released another philosophical magazine in Kathmandu. Generally, only matters relating to philosophy was used to be the main content of that paper. Therefore, Devkota had also written article for that magazine under the title of *Darshan* (Philosophy).

Devkota established Poetry Academy in his own initiation in 1955. He was the Chairperson of that institution. A year after that, since 1956, he brought out the publication of a monthly magazine called 'Indreni', a magazine dedicated to publication of poems in his own initiation and under the editorship of Ishwar Baral. He published most of his unpublished works in this monthly magazine. This magazine was published up to eight issues. Devkota had assigned Ishwar Baral the work of Editor for the earlier four issues of 'Indreni'. Later on, Madhav Ghimire edited the remaining four issues of the magazine. Some English poems were also published in one issue of the magazine on the auspicious occasion of the coronation of King Mahendra. Also, English poems were published in another issue of the magazine on the occasion of the Afro-Asian Writer's Conference. Devkota himself had translated those poems. 'Indreni' remained a qualitative publication in the history of Nepali literary magazines so long as it remained in circulation.

Devkota was very much liked by Narayan Prasad Banskota. Banskota also had extreme fondness for Nepali language-literature, journalism and culture. At that time, 'Pragati' bi-monthly published under the editorship of Banskota was well known. But, the magazine was not financially strong. Therefore, a drive towards increasing the subscribers of 'Pragati' began under the leadership of Devkota. To make 'Pragati' a sustainable magazine, they first of all visited the temple of Pashupatinath and hung the banners of their campaign on the main gate of Pashupatinath. This campaign was organized on the day of *Hari Shayani Ekadashi* (religious day) of 1955. Because, they knew that, on that particular day, many people would come to visit Pashupatinath. With the view to respect Devkota, many devotees who had entered the temple of Pashupatinath subscribed the magazine 'Pragati' at that time. Bishwamani Acharya Dixit also arrived at the main gate of Pashupatinath. Devkota requested him to become subscriber of 'Pragati' to make it sustainable. At that time, Dixit had told Devkota, "Nepali language won't sustain, Hindi will rule the country." But, Devkota couldn't tolerate that utterance. He turned violent as if he would kill Acharya Dixit. Devkota got enraged like fire at that time. In this context, Janak Lal Sharma said, "... who reads the *veda* in anger?" Devkota's hand almost reached to grab his neck. Devkota almost broke the head of that old man taking the baton of a policeman. Bishwamani Acharya is the writer of 'Gorkha Byakaran Bodh'.

The particular incident relating to the campaign of 'Pragati' at Pashupatinath also made intellectuals of the capital somewhat frightened. From that day, Narayan Prasad Banskota also accepted thinking about Devkota as the towering figure of the Nepali language. Devkota often used to reach Banskota's house time and again because of the

affection and respect for the love of the Nepali language. He used to be in the Banskota residence at Kupandole for almost three-four times in a week.

Devkota was also at the forefront in the drive to increase subscribers of 'Sharada' monthly prior to his campaign of the 'Pragati' magazine. He, however, could not find enough subscribers for the magazine 'Sharada' and he ultimately discontinued the work of that magazine.

Devkota's Recognition

When Great Poet Devkota was studying Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) at Patna University, he had won a 'Gold-Cup'. He was awarded with the 'Gold-Cup' in recognition of being first in the 'All India College Debate Competition'. He was also honored by the Patna University for adding the prestige of his college.

Surya Bikram Gyawali was the first Nepalese to recognize Devkota's talents. He wrote 'The Two New Stars in the Nepali Literary Sky' in 1936. These two stars were Siddhicharan Shrestha and Laxmi Prasad Devkota. There was no practice of writing critical appreciation on living person. Therefore, after reading Gyawali's criticism, many intellectuals began to show their interest and attachment towards Devkota. Devkota's recognition and appreciation became a matter of interest among the public in general. Thenceforth, information on Devkota spread to the masses.

Devkota's 'Muna Madan' made him popular as folk poet. After that, he was honored with the title of Pandit, an intellectual, by the Nepali Bhasha Prakashini Samiti. He worked for Nepali Bhasha Prakashini Samiti to write on a contract basis. Surprisingly, he composed the epic *Sulochana* within 10 days which was an unprecedented difficult challenge. He was bestowed with the title of *Aashu Kavi* (extempore poet) for his creation *Sulochana*. Then onwards, he received a

new fame. He was also called the *Kavi Ratna* (poet jewel) at that time. Meanwhile, he was honored with the title of *Yug Kavi* (Epoch Poet) by Nepali Bhasa Prakashini Samiti. Later, he became famous as the Epoch Poet. During the period starting from 1936 to 1953, Devkota became renowned for the various titles which he received for his poetic talents.

Ishwar Baral got the opportunity of being the first one to write the title 'The Great Poet' in *Udaya*, a magazine published in Nepali language from India's Kashi (Issue 1-2, year 11, November-December, 1947). Baral gave an explanation to Kumar Bahadur Joshi on this matter, "I call Devkota 'The Great Poet' because he has the ability to feel the pulse of the nation and represents his generation. He is a nationalist who can speak artistically absorbing the troubles and consolations of the people."

It was only after Ishwar Baral gave the title of 'Great Poet', people started addressing Devkota with the same title. It is because of this recognition, Devkota became a leading poetic personality among the general public. The title 'Great poet' gradually became common among all those using Nepali language. Then after, Devkota lovingly bestowed the title of 'Epoch Poet' to his well wisher and colleague Siddhicharan Shrestha.

'Sahitya Shrot', which was published by the 'Nepali Sahitya Parishad', honored Devkota with the title *Bibhuti* in 1948. It was also published in the editorial of 'Sahitya Shrot' that "Devkota is a 'prestigious literary figure' and a 'luminous star' of the Nepali literary world. The special quality that made him praiseworthy is his talent. He is the only poet having such a talent in Nepali literature. It is to see that a genius like Devkota is rare even in the country like India with a population of four hundred million."

When *Kavi Shiromani*, poet-jewel Lekhnath Paudyal, *Natyasamrat*, Great Dramatist Balkrishna Sama and the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota were in Darjeeling in 1952, the triad of the place *Sudhapa* or Surya Bikram Gyawali, Dharanidhar Koirala and Parasmani Pradhan had also addressed them as 'The Triad'. The intellectual consciousness of Nepal was greatly influenced with this recognition.

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The most respectable friend of Janak Lal Sharma was Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan. On the request of Sharma, Rahul visited Nepal once again. When Rahul was in Nepal, Sharma praised the profound personality of Devkota with an open heart in front of him. And Sankrityayan took the works of Devkota with him when he returned to India. He visited Nepal several times with a view to enhance his understanding about the Nepalese literature. He was the lover of poetry; therefore, he had easily understood Devkota. Therefore, he wrote an extensive article about Devkota for which he met Devkota for five times. He had said at that time, "I consider Devkota the greatest reincarnation after the Buddha." Mahapandit Sankrityayan also wrote on Devkota as the Great Poet. In the article on Devkota, Sankrityayan had said 'one single Devkota' is equal to the three famous Indian poets Jaishankar Prasad, Sumitranandan Pant and Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala'. 65 persons have already done Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) on Sumitranandan Pant. This fact establishes the evidence of the familiarity of these three poets in the Indian literature. Rahul had already called Devkota the poet of the poets in 1953; Sankrityayan mentions that these three poets together is equal to one Devkota. He had expressed his view comparing Devkota with Valmiki and Kalidas, "Valmiki was the great poet of pathetic pathos. A close observation on Kalidas's *Raghubansha* (*Ajbilaap*, a

character) provides the evidence that Kalidas could be called the poet of pathetic pathos. Similarly, Devkota is the Great Poet of pathetic pathos.”

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Devkota was a great person. Ishwar Baral called him the leader of ‘cultural revival’. People loved Devkota’s contribution. Therefore, he kept receiving prizes besides receiving salary and royalty from the ‘Nepali Bhasa Prakashini Samiti’ when he was working there.

Devkota had great desire to get prizes. He mainly aspired to get those honors that carried cash prizes as he was always in need of money. He considered Nobel Prize to be fair. Therefore, he had written the epic ‘Shakuntala’ in English with great patience and dedication.

Devkota didn’t have any political ideology. For him, in every philosophy there is merit. Therefore, he wrote the constitution of the Nepali Congress also. The manifesto of the Gorkha Party was also prepared by Devkota. Devkota was close to the Nepal Communist Party. According to Janak Lal Sharma, Devkota had also gone to inaugurate the conference of K.I.Singh’s Party in Pokhara. Actually, Devkota had two requirements: first, the expenses for his livelihood and secondly the eagerness to lead a carefree life. Keeping Devkota’s weaknesses in mind, many people and parties took favors and benefits from him as he was strongly driven by the temptation. Devkota was guided by the basic norm that one who in principle assists anyone to complete his assignment must receive compensation in return. Devkota had no politics in his policy. He was only a humanist. In the words of the academician of the United States of America, David Robin, “Devkota was not bound with any ‘ism’. Everybody was equal for him.”

Devkota went to Tashkent of Soviet Russia without taking visa and passport from Nepal. He was encouraged to visit Tashkent without the completion of the process by Subarna Shumsher, the then Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Bal Chandra Sharma, the then Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy. And on recommendation of those who encouraged him to visit Tashkent, his remuneration which he used to get from the Academy was discontinued. When he wrote poems on China, the Chinese people and Mao Tse-tung, he didn't receive any friendly treatment from some leaders of the Congress. According to Devkota's niece Mitthu Aryal, "Bal Chandra Sharma was bent upon defaming Devkota as much as he could. Sharma only tried to uproot Devkota." In a similar context, Krishnachandra Singh Pradhan has also said, "Had Kedar Man Vyathit been in the place of Bal Chandra Sharma, the salary of the Great Poet Devkota wouldn't have been stopped." But, after the death of Devkota, Bal Chandra Sharma also spoke positively expressing sadness, "We don't get such example in the field of literary world anywhere, where one single man's work like Devkota's writings have enriched one's mother tongue; like the Nepali language and Devkota's writings that placed Nepali literature in a position to express today's sentiments. He was not only a poet but also was a brave politician."

In recognition of his contribution, Devkota was nominated as a member of the Advisory Council by King Tribhuvan. King Mahendra extended his membership at the Advisory Council. He was a figure of veneration everywhere inside Nepal. His dedication to work also made him the member of the Royal Nepal Academy and ultimately he even became a minister.

All those who recognized him and his contributions respected him. Except his family members, generally,

other people didn't call him 'crazy'. He was always admired by the public. Most of the writers were interested to discuss about his special qualities and dedication. His qualification on the whole was of a distinguished category. According to Dr. Maheshwar Sharma, "The Great Poet Devkota was the lover of humanity and was in favour of national freedom."

People had different saying about Devkota; that was actually the result of the way they used to have understanding about him. In this context, Bhim Nidhi Tiwari also spoke the core of the common people, "In Devkota there was the ideal of God Ram Chandra, the non-violence of the Lord Buddha, the love of Jesus and the charitableness of Mohammad."

Chaitanya has also shed light on Devkota, "He was a great person who raised the Nepali literature to a great height and succeeded in establishing the fame of the Nepali literature in the international arena." Ganesh Bahadur Prasai also wrote on Devkota, "He is life, a living life; ceaselessly, he is the perceptive vision. He himself, as a whole, is the all in all. He is an art that can't be surrounded within the territorial boundary of Nepal." Nava Sapkota has said, "Devkota is the single brightest star of Nepali literature." Not only this, the famous Indian poet Dr. Shiva Mangal Singh Suman also has lauded him, saying, "Devkota is the greatest writer among Nepali writers. He is a great man. If Balkrishna Sama is the *Chauras* of Nepal and Bijay Malla the Eliot, Devkota is the anthology from *Chauras* to Eliot."

Devkota was a respected personality among the Nepali language-lovers. He resided in the heart of most Nepali who respected and loved him very much. In the language of Raj Narayan Pradhan, "He was the jewel on the heads of the

Nepalese.” After his demise, the Saptakoshi River had flowed singing in his praise. When he expired, many people wept. Raj Narayan Pradhan, the Indo-Nepali speaking resident of West Bengal, wrote, “When Devkota died, all Nepalese were awakened unexpectedly as if it was the bolt from the blue.” As a matter of fact, Devkota was the God residing in the hearts of the ‘Nepali’ language lovers. The English poet of Indian-origin Dom Moraes respected Devkota as Eliot. When Devkota was at the Pashupati Aryaghat, Dom had read out English poems on his request.

When Devkota died, the Nepal Government decided to half-mast the national flag as a tribute to the Great Poet. The work of both Houses of the Parliaments was put to halt for one day. In connection with his mourning, all offices and courts were opened only for half day. All the educational institutions of Nepal were closed. At that time, almost all private offices also observed mourning. In the death of common Nepali like Devkota, such an extensive honor, great condolence meeting and special government regards were accorded which neither was given to anyone before nor was seen after that.

After Devkota’s demise, the government was dedicated to provide respect to his family as well. Devkota’s wife Mana Devi received 25,000 rupees from the government: 22,000 rupees to repay the loan that he borrowed to finance his medical treatment and 3000 rupees for his crematory expenses.

King Mahendra made a condolence message publicly. Prime Minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, also a litterateur, presented a condolence proposal in the House of the Parliament and it was passed with respect.

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Shyam Das Baishnav opined on Devkota that he could be called the *Maheshwar* of Nepalese literature. The contributions of *Maheshwar* in the field of Nepali literature was recognized by Nepal Rajakiya Pragya Pratisthan. Hence, ‘Tribhuvan Pragya Puraskar’ was awarded posthumously to Devkota in 1967, particularly, in his recognition. He was given that prize for his lifelong epoch making dedication to literature and his contribution to enrich the Nepali literature. ‘Sajha Prakashan’ also awarded him the ‘Sajha Puraskar’ of 1993 for his great epic *Prithvi Raj Chauhan*.

Financial crisis struck Devkota’s house after his demise. The Nepal Government tried to solve that problem. As a result, Devkota’s children received hundred rupees each from the government until they entered their adulthood. In 1965, the government issued a postage stamp of 15 *paisa* denomination in Devkota’s commemoration.

If we compare the recognitions given to the literary figures of Nepali literature, including the *Adikavi* Bhanubhakta Acharya and *Rastrakavi* Madhav Prasad Ghimire, the Nepal Government has done a lot for Devkota. No writers before or after Devkota received that kind of affection and there is no possibility that anyone would receive that easily in the future.

The followers of Nepali literature felt that they had become somewhat helpless after Devkota’s demise. On the thirteenth day of his death, a huge mass went round the Kathmandu city and a condolence meeting was held in Tudikhel under the Chairmanship of *Kavishiromani* Lekhanath Paudyal. Many such condolence meetings were also held at that time in and outside Nepal.

Devkota’s statue was erected in his honor and memory in the premises of Nepal Sanskritik Sangh, Dillibazar. Prior

to the unveiling of that statue amidst a ceremony, the ‘poet king’ King Mahendra provided 25,000 rupees in Devkota’s name to the Cultural Association. Few years back, Trimurti Niketan was established at ‘Sanchargram’ in Kathmandu in honor of the Great Poet Devkota. The life-size statues of *Kavishiromani* Lekhanath Paudyal, *Natyasamrat* Balkrishna Sama and Laxmi Prasad Devkota were erected on the rooftop of a two storeyed building ‘Trimurti Niketan’.

The process of establishing literary associations, educational institutions, libraries and cultural organizations in the name of the Great Poet continued. His statues were erected in India and China as well. Devkota’s statue was erected in Lhasa in Tibet, China with the effort and dedication of the Consulate General of Nepal, Shankar Prasad Pandey. Tulsī Bhattarai, writer, went to Lhasa and commented, “Crossing the border of the nation, Devkota became international. Devkota is the glory of Nepal and the Nepalese.” That was the same place that has been mentioned in Devkota’s *Muna Madan*. In fact the story of this folk epic revolved mostly around Lhasa.

The establishment and distribution of different prizes, honors and scholarships in the name of Devkota have been still going on in different parts of Nepal. Furthermore, the Nepali language lovers living abroad established different contemporary associations and honorary titles in his name.

There are many Nepalese students who have written research work on the Great Poet. These include students who are pursuing Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) on works of Devkota. Kumar Bahadur Joshi, Ram Prasad Gyawali, Ghanashyam Nepal, Sanjay Rai Bantawa, Durga Prasad Aryal, Mahadev Awasthi, Ramnath Ojha, Krishna Raj Adhikari and Netra Prasad Neopane have

already done Ph.D. on Devkota's different works. Indra Bilas Adhikari has done Ph.D. on the 'Comparative Study between Laxmi Prasad Devkota and the English Romantic Poets of the Nineteenth Century.

Many wrote criticisms on Devkota's works. There are people who have published books on the works of the Great Poet under the title 'Devkota'. Many people also wrote miscellaneous criticisms, poems, essays and literary compositions about his contributions. Some social and literary magazines of the Nepali language also published special issues of his contribution in his honor.

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Trimurti Niketan took initiatives to celebrate Devkota's Centenary Festival with different programs in a grand manner. As a result, the meeting of the Trimurti Niketan held under the Chairmanship of Indira Prasai had formed 'Laxmi Prasad Devkota Centenary Committee' or the Great Poet Devkota's Centenary Festival. To realize this decision made by the Trimurti Niketan, efforts were made within the country and abroad. Puspa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', the then Prime Minister of Nepal Government (who is also the current Prime Minister of Nepal Government) had provided a hefty sum of money in recognition of this committee. The then Deputy Prime Minister Bam Dev Gautam also contributed in making the program a grand success. After that, the Nepal Government, formed under the Prime Ministership of Madhav Kumar Nepal, helped to make the work of this committee more extensive by providing additional financial support.

The 25 member committee of Devkota Centenary Festival had Mod Nath Prashrit as the Chairperson and Bhadra Kumari Ghale as the Vice Chairperson. The members

were Arun 'Sayami', Indira Prasai, Usha Thakur, Usha Sherchan, Kumar Bahadur Joshi, Gargi Sharma, Gopal Thakur, Govinda Bhatta, Chooda Mani Bandhu, Jiba Lamichhane, Thakur Parajuli, Narhari Acharya, Nitya Raj Pandey, Rajendra Bimal, Rajendra Subedi, Ram Sharan Darnal, Shanta Shrestha, Shyam Prasad Sharma, Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav, Satyamohan Joshi and Hari Shrestha. Narendra Raj Prasai was the member-secretary for the very literary fete.

Devkota's Demise

It was almost certain that neither any medications nor any efforts would save the life of Devkota. As he gasped almost his last, his relatives and well-wishers took him to *Aaryaghat* (holy cremation) at Pashupati. Devkota sensed his inevitable death arriving closer each second. He was surrounded by his family members, relatives, several literary figures and other well-wishers within the premises of Shanta Bhawan hospital.

Dr. Edgar R. Miller desired to save Devkota for few more days through blood transfusion but he refused. He told Dr. Miller, "Why do you want to waste the blood of these youths? All these efforts are futile, doctor! My death is unavoidable."

He endured horrendous pain and when his departure was more or less certain, he wished to have some poison and sought goodbye from this world rather than to suffer the intolerable burning and ache. He wanted to be free from the never ending pain of cancer. When he was about to be taken to the *Aaryaghat*, his close friend Basudev Sharma Luitel came. Devkota asked him whether he had brought some poison for him. He urged him to kill him then and there; he said that it would be a virtuous act to relieve him from all soreness and discomfort. At that moment, he handed the authority of preservation and copyright of his

literary creations on the hands of his youngest brother Gopimadhav Devkota.

On September 11, 1959, he thanked the two bighearted youths for donating him their blood. He said, "I am thankful to the two bold boys Padmanath Devkota (my neice, the son of my brother Lekhnath Devkota) and Bholaman Singh Thapa (later, he became the Assistant Minister) who supplemented my breathing for the past few days. May the Almighty bless them with good health and long life. Now, I'll have no need of any more human blood. Those, who are standing by for the blood donation, I'm grateful to them as well." Devkota also thanked Dataram Sharma, the editor of *Haalkhabar* who frequently published news concerning his health.

From his death bed, Devkota wrote three poems in Nepali and English. He gave two of the poems to the poet Hari Shrestha that included his last Nepali poem titled *Shunyama Shunyasari*, (Being empty in emptiness) and the English poem 'Life of the Richest'. He gifted another English poem titled 'Pramithian Pain I Bear' to Dr. Miller. The last stanza of his last Nepali Poem is stated below:

*I lost all of my rituals and purifications
I vanished in emptiness being empty
I was born and raised in this heaven
But at last, I disappeared in ashes*

People sympathized with his pitiable situation. Seeing him in unbearable pain, people were sad and teary eyed. Unable to bear any additional pain, he mumbled, "Why am I still alive?" They made him wear white *bhoto* (waistcoat) which is worn inside and *suruwal* (trousers). He was driven to *Aaryaghat* in a motor vehicle at 5.30 am on September

12, 1959. Surrounded by relatives, he affirmed that he'd not be able to subsist more than 24 hours.

According to Jiwan Lal Satyal, Devkota looked like a skeleton. Only his nose, eyes and ears were visible. According to Dom Moraes, Devkota looked as if he had put on a mask. The *Aaryaghat* was full of his relatives and admirers. The literary figures Janak Lal Sharma and Madan Mani Dikshit had arrived to pay homage. Dikshit had published news in *Haalkhabar* regarding the last stage of Devkota, because of which, the number of visitors had increased. Dikshit had taken his photographs which became the last snaps of Devkota. According to Dikshit, the family members and relatives of Devkota blamed him of selling his photographs and earning cash. Dikshit had clarified that he had kept the snaps of Devkota in his studio, but never put up for sale; rather he had distributed his photos free of cost.

Devkota least bothered about Hinduism till his life time. During the last stage of his life, he told Purna Prasad Brahman, "I spent my whole life as an atheist, now I lack time even to consider God. Lord Krishna is eternal." In fact, Devkota had faith on the existence of God but he strongly disliked the vanity in the name of religion. According to Chooda Mani Bandhu, he didn't believe in priesthood and always emphasized that the God is within self. Before he was taken to *Aaryaghat*, Ram Hari Sharma had asked him in the previous evening, "What are your feelings on God and heaven?" Devkota had replied, "Not sure! There is only darkness in front of me. I'm looking for some light but can't see the star anywhere."

The literary and intellectual personalities such as Madhav Ghimire, Ram Hari Sharma, Vishwanath Upadhyaya

and Krishna Prasad Bhandari were actively involved in the care and protection of the poet Gopal Prasad Rimal. They had collected donations for the treatment of Rimal. From that collected money, they had given 1200 rupees to Devkota. Bhandari stated that their support had consoled Devkota at that time.

When Devkota was at the death-bed, he wished to bow his head on the feet of his sisters and aunt (father's sister). His final wish was fulfilled. He was resting on a bed and his sisters and aunt kept their feet on his forehead in turn.

Devkota held Lekhnath Paudyal in high regard. He was inspired by him. Every day, Lekhnath stayed till late evening at *Aaryaghat* and came in the morning. On September 14, 1959 he came a bit late, Devkota was waiting for him. He said, "Today, you are late Sir! Now, it's time to leave this world." Lekhnath was quite serious, his eyes were in tears. He could hardly speak, he remarked, "You are leaving so earlier *babu!*"

Devkota wanted to write even before his demise. He told Shankar Lamichhane, "I have understood the true meaning of life at this stage. Wish, I could write today and survive for two more years with this new found knowledge of life!" The fate was obligatory and his destiny was fixed as described by poet Lekhnath in his poem titled *Kaalmahima* (dignity of death/time). Lekhnath put a *teeka* mark on Devkota's forehead. Then, people were inconsolable and they were sobbing. Then, the then Minister Ganeshman Singh arrived and he too began to lament.

Balkrishna Sama had a great respect for Devkota. English literati including Devkota and Sama were highly

influenced by the works of Dom Moraes. He was the first foreign author who was awarded with the Hawthornden Prize provided from Britain. At that time, he was only 19 years old. Coincidentally, he had visited Nepal. Meanwhile, Sama appealed him to meet Devkota. Thus, Moraes along with the famous Indian poet and cultural attache Dr. Shivmangal Singh 'Suman' visited *Aaryaghat*. Dr. Suman had told Moraes, "Every poet desires a farewell from another poet when his journey of life is about to end."

Devkota's condition was getting worse and he was unable to utter a single word. When he saw Dr. Suman and Moraes, Devkota was teary-eyed; he said, "I'm at *Brahmanda Dahan* (burning of head/universe). This hell is like *Dawagni* (flames). Human beings haven't yet invented something that could challenge the excruciating pain of cancer." Moraes' presence was like a magic. Everyone was amazed to see Devkota speak smoothly. Defeating the fate for some time, he talked to Moraes, "I've read your books. I know your friend as well. It's a miracle to have met you when I am about to die!" Devkota received attention and affection from a foreign poet even during the last days of his life. He continued further, "I'm dying; otherwise, I'd show you my poems. Have you ever gone through my poems?" Then he requested Moraes to take his poems from Sama. He then poured his heart out, "There remains only an inch of me as part of my physique. That one inch is not letting me leave this body. I pray to God to take me away. If Lord Pashupatinath appears before me, I'd definitely request him to break my head." Devkota added, "They blamed me as a leftist, because, I had visited Russia; but, I was simply a poet. Would you please pray for my instant death? I think the 'fire-pit' of so-called 'hell' is far more comfortable than this. Among the Nepalese authors, I'm the

most unfortunate one." Moraes was quite depressed and hurt to hear about Devkota's miseries.

Devkota desired listening to the poems of Moraes. Moraes sat pretty near to him and recited two poems. Then, Moraes recited another poem of Edna Saint Vincent Millay. It was time for the flight of Moraes. Devkota asked him, "Can't you stay here till I am alive?" Moraes felt helpless. He kissed on Devkota's forehead which was too cold and uttered with much suffocation, "We must go now." Devkota tried to raise his hand for goodbye.

On this account, Dom Moraes has inscribed, "Suddenly, the clown tried to scream. The shrunken lips trembled but couldn't smile. His eyes were flooding as of a rivulet in the rainy days making a lake in the hollow of his cheeks. I gently touched his hand with both my hands."

On the day of his departure, Devkota asked Mana Devi, "How much money is left with you dear?" Mana Devi replied that she had 200 rupees with her. Then Devkota said, "If I'd live for few more days, you won't be able to feed me. This money is essential in my funeral process." Then, his condition got worse and more serious. After 2 pm, he started to lose sense. The masses were on the rise every minute. Mana Devi held Devkota's hand and made him touch the tail of cow as a ritual of *Gaudaan* (the process of offering a cow to the priest or Brahmin at the end of someone's life). It is believed that after this, the spirit of the deceased person rests in peace in heaven. Poet Gopal Pandey 'Asim' arrived almost rushing at 5 pm. Representing all Nepalese poets and writers, Asim saluted Devkota. Joining his feeble hands, Devkota responded. The hands were getting cold every second. The *Vaidhya* (an ayurvedic physician) said, "Now, it's time for shifting

him to *Brahmanaal* (the sacred place for laying down a person till his last breath). Devkota's brothers Madhusudan and Gopimadhav carried him to *Brahmanaal* to put few drops of holy water in his mouth from river Bagmati. It was 6.10 pm when Devkota breathed his last. It was a coincidence that Devkota had arrived in this world at dusk and left the world at dusk. There was not a single soul amongst the crowd that was not lamenting and bawling. Devkota's body was kept in *Brahmanaal* for sometime. All of a sudden, Mana Devi jumped into the river below the *Brahmanaal* and bowed her head on the feet of Devkota and sobbed hugging his body. Everybody was stunned witnessing this. Poet Siddhicharan wept and sobbed bitterly. After a while, his body was carried to the stairs beside the *Brahmanaal*.

The, then, Prime Minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala arrived along with some ministers and officials. In a sad tone Bishweshwar said, "I want to have a glance of the face of our Great Poet." The coffin was taken in front of him that made the eyes of Bishweshwar watery. He paid reverence, standing silently for a minute. All were enduring the pain, seeing the sight of the flaming corpse of Devkota. At 11 pm, the funeral pyre ended.

After his bereavement, poet Bhimnidhi Tiwari had stated, "Devkota will live like *Astachiranjivi* (they were the eight immortal in Hindu belief). Pandit Shyam Das Baishnav told Mana Devi, "*Bajyai* (the word of respect to a Brahmin lady), you were searching God elsewhere but the Almighty was at your own home which you failed to notice." Mana Devi had replied, "Of course! I didn't realize this. Even the great saints seemed impatient after his demise."

Govinda Bhatta wrote, "It's not easy to win the hearts of people. For this, one requires to live and die like Devkota." A number of poets and authors too wrote about him. In spite of extreme poverty, incurable disease and a countless obstacles, the Great Poet never let his creativity cease. He continued to write till the end. He left the world on Monday, September 14, 1959, thus being liberated from all pains.