

Roti-Beti Bonds: Exploring the Cultural and Literary Kinship Between Nepal and India**Raj Kumar Tharu*****DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.3126/academia.v4i2.82969>

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Abstract

This paper examines the cultural and literary ties between Nepal and India, focusing on their interdependence's historical and contemporary facets. The study which relies upon a verity of secondary sources, examines how cultural and literary contacts have led to the formation of a familial relationship between the two countries. The qualitative study illustrates the rich and complicated nature of this relationship, which has been influenced by common linguistic, religious, cultural, and economic traditions as well as political and economic forces. Through an examination of major texts, this article explores how literature has worked as a channel for the flow of ideas, beliefs, and experiences between the two countries. Furthermore, it examines the problems and opportunities posed by this relationship in the context of the region's shifting social, economic, and political realities by emphasizing the significance of cultural and literary interchange in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between Nepal and India, as well as the need for continuing communication and collaboration in the years to come. The paper concludes that the two ever-closest South Asian countries- Nepal and India- and their peoples, despite having geographically and politically distinct identities, have been part of the same family for centuries due to the deep similarities and connections among cultural, literary, linguistic, and religious aspects, as well as other social factors.

Keywords: Cultural –linguistic- and literary ties, ethnic, family, religion, Roti- beti, tradition

Introduction

India and Nepal share a close geographic proximity and a deep cultural and literary history. The two countries are tied together not only by geography but also by shared religious, linguistic, ethnic, and social traditions. India and Nepal's literary and cultural exchanges have deepened the bonds between their peoples. The literary and cultural relations between India and Nepal have been heavily influenced by religion. Close proximity, the same cultural values, and common religious beliefs have all contributed to a strong bond of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. Scholars frequently use the term "family" to describe the closeness and affection between the two nations having the *Roti-Beti* relationship among the Nepalese and Indian people since ages (Parashar, 2016). Hinduism is the dominant religion in both countries, and its adherents celebrate many of the same holidays and observe many of the same rituals. Hinduism has had an impact on the visual arts, the built environment, the performing arts, the written word, and the study of philosophy in both countries.

Moreover, both countries have substantial Buddhist communities with roots in Lumbini, Nepal, the site of the Buddha's birth. Buddhism has connected Nepal and India's artistic and literary tradition in many ways that include meditation, painting, sculpture, and most importantly philosophy as well.

Literary and cultural connections between India and Nepal date back to ancient times, when Indian traditions and culture started to influence Nepal. The literature, art, and architecture of Nepal have been influenced by the Hindus and the Sanskrit texts of India (Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi, 2025). Nepal contributes to India regarding the pioneering of Buddhism from Nepal itself. Much of the Indian arts seem to be affected by Nepal in this or that way. The literature for both of the countries is evidently sprouting from each one's land and society. Culturally and linguistically these countries have never been the two separate nations for the simple reason that literature and literary activities have always kept them really close. The plain region of Nepal known as the Terai is very much similar to the bordering area of India. Thus, the same natured people reside undisturbed in those areas in both Nepal and India. Most remarkable example of Nepal India linguistic and literary ties is that many Indians from Sikkim, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam have adopted the Nepali language which is the official language of Nepal (Ghimire, 2017). Literature has been written extensively in Sanskrit which is the ancient language of Buddhism and Hinduism heavily practiced in both nations.

Numerous literary genres in both nations, such as epics, plays, poetry, prose, fables, and philosophies, have been influenced by Sanskrit. India and Nepal are the two closest neighbors in South Asia, and their intimate literary and cultural ties have endured despite periods of hardship and conflict. Nepal and India's literary and cultural ties, have ever been strengthening from the past to the present and is bound to continue in the future too. Thus, the study on this connection between these two countries is likely to add a significant knowledge to the future study of the other disciplines of bilateral relations also.

Research Objectives

This research paper's goal is to look closely at the historical and cultural roots of the Roti-Beti ties that exist between Nepal and India. More particularly, the paper will focus on how the two countries' shared literary traditions, languages, and religious texts show how close their people are to each other. In this research, I have used a postcolonial comparative framework to look at how both countries use literature and culture to confront issues of identity, legacy, and belonging. The research paper's objective is to look at the cultural traditions, family ties, and cross-border effects that help improve relations between India and Nepal. The goal of this research paper is also to show how important folk traditions, myths, and oral storytelling are for keeping and building this unique cultural bond.

Review of Literature

Ethnicity is one of the main things that affects the close literary and cultural ties between India and Nepal. Because of the migrations, invasions, and interactions that have happened over the years, both countries have a complicated and diverse mix of ethnic groups. There are many ethnic groups in both countries that have similar backgrounds and cultural practices (Lama, 2019). As an example, the Terai people, now called the Madheshi of Nepal, have connections with people living in the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. There is some kind of relationship between Rajputs of India and

Tharus of Nepal. There is a great deal of relationship between Gurungs and Magars of Nepal and Gorkhas of India. There is some form of relationship between Pahari people of India and Newar people of Nepal. There is some resemblance between Tibetans living in India and Sherpas living in Nepal. Folk music, dances, stories, festivals, and traditions have enriched the literature and culture of both nations.

Many political, social, and economic factors have also helped to strengthen the literary and cultural ties between India and Nepal. One of the reasons why their bilateral relations has got much stronger is that they share a history of connectivity for over two thousand years (Sangraula, 2022). The Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which was signed in 1950, started a close relationship between India and Nepal. The two countries have worked together in both global and regional groups, such as the UN, SAARC, and BIMSTEC. Both sides have a lot of plans and agreements in place to make trade, tourism, healthcare, education, and other areas better. Because of these things, people, groups, and ideas can regularly share works and ideas in many literary and cultural areas, such as music, film, art, and more.

During Emperor Ashoka's rule, the Mauryan Empire was known for its artistic and intellectual achievements. Its influence spread to Nepal and other countries as well (Banerjee, 2015; Karan, 2020). Nepal and India have had cultural and literary ties for a long time that have shaped who they are and how they understand each other (Shrestha, 2018). Indian culture had a big impact on how Nepal's literary and cultural traditions grew over time (Bajracharya, 2017). Nepali, the official language of Nepal, comes from Sanskrit, one of India's oldest languages (Bhattarai, 2014). Nepalese literature has also had an effect on Indian literature (Bhattacharya, 2011). Nepal has become a center for Buddhist research since Ashoka's visit long ago. People from India and other countries come to work there.

Bhattarai (2014) remarks that the growth of Nepal's literary and cultural traditions has greatly experienced the effect of Indian culture. Nepali language evidently comes from Sanskrit, one of India's oldest languages. Hinduism, the major religion in Nepal, also came from ancient India. Music, dance, painting, and sculpture of both of the countries adopt the same literary and cultural traditions. Two of the greatest works of Hindi and Sanskrit literature are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* which have been translated and published into Nepali language and have gained much popularity like in India.

Along with that the works of Indian poets and writers like Tagore are being translated into Nepali literature with great importance (Bhattacharya, 2011). Much like the impact of Nepalese literature on Indian literature, there is a great readership and appreciation for Nepalese literature in India also (Joshi, 2010). The Nepali litterateurs like Bhanubhakta Acharya and Laxmi Prasad Devkota are greatly admired and loved by Indian readers and literature lovers. Much more additional efforts have been made in the past few decades to boost up Nepal India literary and cultural relationship for which the very concept of "Roti-beti bond" has made a crucial impact. Nepal has hosted the *Indian Film Festival* and the *Kumbh Mela* over the past few years have showcased Indian culture, highlighting its richness and diversity (Pandey, 2019).

It has also been observed that the sponsored cultural events aimed at the promotion of Nepali literature and culture have helped Nepali writers and artists, which has also benefitted by India (Karki & Koirala, 2020). Their literary and cultural relation is the evidence of Nepal and India very strong and historical and cultural relation in the past. As they have a lot to share and respect for each other, the mutual cultural exchange has been good for them too. They are likely going to be very significant fountains of literary and cultural influence for both countries as they expand and know themselves.

Nepal India literary relations can be noticed in translations of Indian epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* (Joshi 2010). It is further more influenced by translations of the literary works of the poets like Rabindranath Tagore (Chakraborty, 2018). Bhattacharya (2011) expresses his views on this relationship and further says that there are several ways in which Nepalese literature has also made an impact on Indian literature. Thus, Nepal and India have made efforts in various ways towards strengthening their cultural and intellectual relation in recent times, and the relation has continued to grow (Karan, 2020). India has generously helped Nepali authors and artists by promoting cultural events and Nepali literature and culture in whole India itself (Singh, 2018).

Methodology

This study is qualitative and analytical in character, taking an interdisciplinary approach based on literary and cultural studies. It draws on a diverse set of secondary sources, including classical epics, scriptures, historical writings, and translated works by poets and authors from India and Nepal. The research is based on secondary sources like historical records, official treaties, academic articles, and cultural reports. There is a comparison of social, linguistic, religious, and ethnic aspects in the study's framework. For understanding the Nepal-India relationship I have applied the postcolonial lens that reveals their multilayered literary and cultural links. Nepal and India have different history of colonization and imperialism for the fact that Nepal is partially autonomous and less colonized; but India was directly colonized by the British. Cultural power and spatial relationships in these two neighboring countries shape the identities, literary cultures, and connections. The legacy of colonialism seems to have been experienced and interpreted in different ways in Nepal and India. The framework explores the impact these influences have had on literary forms and cultural practices—works and traditions that are intertwined. The lens brings to light the discourse between the two countries' cultures and literatures—identity, hybridity, continuity, and resistance.

Results

The finding or the result of the research paper shows the strong cultural and artistic connections between India and Nepal. Similar marital performances in which the bride or the bridegroom is from the either country. This practice of either giving or receiving the daughters in the form of marriage is from the mythological time. Moreover, the common types of meals bring the people from these countries together. This very connection is popularly referred to as "Rotti-beti bonds." Historical, mythological and contemporary sources suggest that these ties enhance the mutual understanding between the two countries, foster better relations, and preserve cultural traditions across generations (Socio-Cultural Relations, 2025). Through cultural and literary exchanges that goes beyond the borders, the neighboring Nepal and India have affected each past and the present. Their close relationship is illustrated through Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Maithili, and Bhojpuri—Indo-Aryan and Sino-Tibetan languages. These languages encourage creative exchange and mutual understanding (Nepal-India Relations, n.d.) because they share similar grammatical and lexical bases. Ancient languages like Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit are at the heart of both Indian and Nepali languages. These languages have helped form common literary and philosophical ideas.

In fastening the cultural ties between Nepal and India faith and mythology have played crucial role. Buddhism and Hinduism, the main religions in these countries, share a spiritual and cultural base. It was Lumbini, Nepal where Siddhartha Gautam was born in and it was Bodh Gaya India where he

got enlightenment and gave his debut speech in Sarnath, India. His life shows how both countries' spiritual landscapes change. Religion in Nepal has been influenced by Jainism, which grew up with Buddhism in India and promotes peace and independence. The Ramayana and Mahabharata also show cross-cultural ties. Sita's marriage to Lord Rama at Ayodhya, India, is a great example of how India and Nepal share families and traditions. Janakpur, Nepal, is where Sita is said to have been born. Kirats of Nepal sent men to help the Pandava army, according to the Mahabharata. Old ethnic and military alliances worked like this.

When it comes to writing, people like Bhanubhakta Acharya are great examples of how complex cultural heritage can be. Acharya's Nepali Ramayana was directly based on the Indian tale. This shows how Indian literature has been reimagined and reinterpreted in Nepali settings. In 1924, literary groups like the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan were founded in Darjeeling, and agreements were signed between the Nepal Academy and the Sahitya Akademi of India (Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, n.d.; MyRepublica, 2023) to make this cross-cultural exchange even more official.

People from different countries have interacted with each other before. The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between India and Nepal lets both countries have open borders and equal rights in work, land, and living space. These legal frameworks make it easier for people from groups with similar caste or ethnic backgrounds to get to know each other, marry, and share rituals. Some of the holidays and rituals that are marked with the same amount of zeal and tradition on both sides of the border are Dashain, Tihar, Holi, and Buddha Jayanti. The modern cultural flows are caused by migration, education, and the media. While Nepali culture finds expression and recognition in Indian regions like Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Assam where there are large Nepali populations, Indian films, television, music, and literature are also widely consumed in Nepal (Outlook India, 2023). The two countries can share more ideas, beliefs, and stories with each other thanks to the growth of digital media and academic cooperation between the two countries.

Another thing that has helped these ties grow is distance. The Himalayas have long been a way for people to share art, language, and spirituality, even though they are often seen as a natural barrier. The Himalayan rivers that water both countries help to keep the environment and cultures together. People living on both sides of the border share the same way of life, which is helped by the fact that they use the same farming methods, biodiversity, and temperature. Because of this, the *Roti-beti* links between Nepal and India go back a long way and are still strong today. The connection between these two countries' cultures and literature is strong and will last. It is the basis of their relationship and includes everything from sacred texts and shared gods to daily language, festivals, literature, and marriages.

Discussion

The cultures of India and Nepal have influenced each other's art, architecture, literature, dance, festivals, and rituals. Their shared geography and history are reflected in the diversity and depth of their heritage. The religious and aesthetic traditions of India and Nepal have an impact on or are linked to a number of art forms and genres. Paintings, sculptures, statues, murals, carvings, ceramics, textiles, and other works of art all depict their gods, goddesses, myths, legends, tales, and symbols. Similar methods, supplies, hues, and themes are used in the art produced in Nepal and India. Their homes, palaces, forts, monasteries, temples, and stupas all serve as symbols of their political and religious

beliefs and practices. Additionally, they build their architecture using similar forms, patterns, shapes, and structures.

Languages and writing styles of these countries are connected to or influence many types of writing and styles between them. They've written down their moral code in epics, poems, novels, plays, essays, and other forms of written art. Literature from both cultures is written in similar languages, scripts, alphabets, and grammatical patterns. The musical and cultural traditions of India and Nepal are comparable to or affected by one another. Their music ranges from classical to folk to spiritual to pop. In addition, many musical elements, including instruments, scales, rhythms, and melodies, are shared between the two musical traditions. There are many dance styles and traditions in India and Nepal that are similar to or influenced by those of other countries. Their stories and ideas are reflected in a wide variety of dance styles, including classical, folk, ceremonial, and modern. They both dance in the same way, using the same steps, hand positions, and attitudes. Several festivals and cultural traditions in India and Nepal have been inspired by or are comparable to their counterparts in Nepal. Religion, culture, the changing of the seasons, and the nation's history are all celebrated through various celebrations. They also celebrate holidays and customs with similar rituals, ceremonies, activities, and food.

The Treaty of Sugauli (4 March 1816) was an agreement between the Gurkha Chiefs of Nepal and the British Indian government that ended the Anglo-Nepalese (Gurkha) War (1814–16). Prior to the Treaty, the Tharus of the two kingdoms were a single family (Sarbahari, 2023). The only thing separating the Tharus of Nepal and India is the border, but their way of life appears to be identical. The style of worship of Maruwa, Bhuihar Than, of the Indian Tharus is comparable to that of the Nepalese Tharus. It is thought that the relationship of *Roti Beti* between Nepal and India only exists in the Madhesi society, although this link has existed for years in the Tharu culture as well. There are many parallels between the Tharu dialects of both countries, particularly in the border regions: the language of the Rana Tharus of Kailali, Kanchanpur is similar to that of the bordering Indian people of Chandan Chowki. In this regard Sarbahari Krishna Raj (2023) opines in one of his *Ratopati* article that the *Katharia* Tharu language of Bardiya is identical to the *Katharia* Tharu language of Balai village in Uttar Pradesh, India. The Tharu language of Deukhuri is similar to the Tharu language of Bhamar. The Tharu language of Bara, Parsa, is comparable to the Tharu language of West Champaran, Bihar in India.

The Roti-Beti relationship, which represents both marital and emotional ties, continues these strong cross-cultural parallels by extending beyond specific ethnic groups into the larger sociocultural domains of India and Nepal. Intermarriages between Nepali and Indian families continue to occur in many border communities, strengthening kinship as well as common languages, customs, culinary practices, and kinship terminologies. Jha and Jha (2020) opine that rituals and festivals naturally strengthen customs of both of the countries. Such customs of mixed nature are commonly seen during weddings, religious performances, and public celebrations in Nepal- India bordering locations like Birgunj–Raxaul, Janakpur–Sitamarhi, and Nepalgunj–Bahraich, Dhangadhi and Kanchanpur (Pradhan, S. 1998). India and Nepal share oral tradition also in a remarkable number. Both countries share the things like folk songs, proverbs, riddles, and epics. Marriage songs in the Maithili or Bhojpuri-speaking regions of Nepal and Bihar often explore themes of honor, migration, agriculture, and family ties in very common ways. In this regard Basnet and Jha, (2019) mark that fact this connection in oral forms and performative way highlights the idea that literary kinship exists not just in various books and epics but also in people's voices, customs, and memories.

It is evident that Nepal has had similar kind of literary as well as educational cultures since quite a long time. People of both the countries study in their neighboring countries as per their necessity and conditions of home and families. This act of educational movement has resulted to literary relations not only in the levels of curriculum but also in people-to-people level. There has also been a massive sharing in books, journals, leaflets, brochures, and various kinds of card publication in the languages like Hindi, Nepali, Maithili, and Bhojpuri that are spoken both in Nepal and India. The common social issues like migration, caste, identity, gender, and spirituality often appear in poetry, fiction, and essays published in magazines, newspapers, and literary journals on both sides (Chauhan, 2024).

Regional cinema and the rise of digital platforms have helped bridge the literary and cultural gap. Indian audiences are increasingly interested in Nepali music and literature, especially in digital formats, while Nepali viewers enjoy Indian films in Hindi and Bhojpuri. This mutual appreciation supports a living connection of Roti-Beti ties in both cultural creation and consumption (Sharma, J.K., 2024). Thus, the Roti-Beti bond is a real and ongoing relationship that appears in everyday language, rituals, literature, and cultural production. It shows how the people of India and Nepal maintain a literary and emotional connection that is deeply rooted in history yet continually evolving, despite their political differences.

Conclusion

For many decades, India and Nepal have been cordial neighbours. Gurung (2020) says that geography, history, culture, and personal relationships all play a big role in their relationship. Roti-Beti is a name that perfectly represents the long-lasting, complicated, and mutually beneficial social, cultural, political, economic, and religious ties between the two countries. These links are founded on their shared history, which is like being a member of the same big family. Literary and cultural exchanges have always been good for both countries. They have made it much easier to share ideas, philosophies, stories, and customs. For a long time, religious texts, ceremonies, pilgrimages, and temples have been the spiritual basis for this family relationship. Sita, who was born in Janakpur, Nepal, is a mythological figure that shows how closely religious imagination and cultural geography are connected. Both countries esteem epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata very highly.

The ethnic groups like Indian Rajputs, Gurungs, Magars, and Gorkhas; the Nepalese Madhesis; the inhabitants of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar; and the Newars and *Paharis* share the language, culture, and family history. Folk dancing, music, oral literature, traditions, and festivities have always been essential parts of the cultures and literatures of Nepal and India. In addition to this, artists from both countries have used the same words, colours, procedures, and themes for a long time. The alike houses, palaces and religious places show people of the both countries have the same political and religious views. Despite some political disputes or conflicts seen occasionally, the literary and cultural ties between India and Nepal have been deep and long-lasting. Because of continual migration, intermarriage, academic exchange, and creative collaboration, they have strong ties to both the past and the present. Dashain, Tihar, Holi, and Chhath are some of the most popular festivals that bring people together across borders. The common use of languages like Bhojpuri, Maithili, Nepali, and Hindi has helped people understand each other in a better way causing to appreciate each other's literature and culture even more deeply.

Thus, the study shows that India and Nepal have a strong family connection that goes beyond their official ties. Culture, language, literature, religion, and social structure all help to strengthen their unique bond. The *Roti-Beti* relationship is important for the future cooperation, understanding, and growth of both South Asian countries. It has a long history of literary and cultural ties that renders something more significant than it has even been described in a number of versions.

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