

A Rhetorical Comparative Study of Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Expressway Through Media

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Abstract

Nepal Army is a committed institution. Its involvement in constructing Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Expressway or, Fast-track (K-TME/KTFT) is from 2011 A. D. but still this fast track progresses just 16.10 percent of the total work, which is quite unbelievable. This article discusses different obstacles of the national pride and other projects which the army is also facing in the fast track work. Keeping in mind the rhetorical theory and ethics, this article has abundant media concerns for comparative studies, the textual study through different texts, and the accidental partly but unofficial fast track visit of the author so, a quasi-experimental method works here. To make army, the government, involved companies and the people realize their common goals towards the fast track among many hurdles, and to act accordingly with high degree of morality, which their language hear, the army will accomplish the work in time and there will be overall benefits.

Keywords: *Rhetoric, ethical elements, commitment, obstacle, slow progress, (national) pride projects, and transparency.*

Introduction

From some years in the recent, Nepal Army (NA) is busy to construct Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Expressway/Fast-Track (K-TME/KTFT) from Kathmandu to Nijgadh as a responsible agency with a moral obligation to accomplish the construction work in time with good harmony among different agencies. This expressway runs under the Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Fast Track Road Project, Nepal. Regarding many national pride projects, the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transportation (MoPIT) mentions them in the fiscal year (FY) 2019/020. Some of them are: The Railway and Metro Development Project, Pushpalal (Mid-mountain) Highway Project; Hulaki Highway Project, and North-South Highway with its several parts like Koshee Corridor; Kali-Gandaki Corridor (Beni-Jomsom-Korola 186 km long to be built during the FY 2016/017 – FY 2022/023, and Kali-Gandaki Corridor (Maldhunga-Ramdi-Gaindakot 245 km long to be built during FY 2009/010 – FY 2023/024) (“Annual Progress Report of Fiscal year 2019/020”, 2020, pp 29-34). However, the progress report of all pride projects in this current fiscal year is below under the sub-title “A Glance at Some Other Projects”.

K-TME/KTFT will prove itself a lifeline of the Terai-Madhesh as it touches many other road project as well as other forms of transportation projects there like Sirsiya (Birgunj) Dryport, Nijgadh International Airport, East-West Highway, existing and the proposed railway lines and so on. KTFT will also be better useful for the local people for those who will travel through proposed Kathmandu – Raksaul Railway (40 km) and also East–West Railway. Kathmandu–Raksaul Railway Project’s survey work has begun its work by the aid of the government of India (Rokka, February 14, 2022, p. 2).

The Rhetorical Theory Embedded in Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Fast Track (Expressway) (K-TME/KTFT)

This research work considers on a type of commitment of all the related parties in the construction mission of the project. Of course, “rhetoric” becomes a vital term in this article when people seek the completion of the fast track in time because “rhetoric” is a single key word that can associatively explain “ethics” and “ethical elements” too. There are many academicians from long past to present like Cicero (90 C. E.), Plato (380 B. C. E.), Aristotle (350 B. C. E.), Kant (1790 A. D.), George Campbell (late 18th century), I. A. Richards (1936), Richard Weaver (1953), Donald Cross Bryant (1973), Kenneth Burke (1969), Charles Bazerman (1988), Judith Butler (2001), James Berlin and so on who have their own opinions about “rhetoric” for the time being. Out of many definitions of rhetoric by various luminaries, this article draws attention on the two. Charles Bazerman focuses on “use of language”, “symbols to realize goals” and “accordingly human activities acted upon the goals”. Bazerman mentions about rhetoric: “By rhetoric I mean broadly the study of how people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities. Rhetoric is ultimately a practical study offering people greater control over their symbolic activity. (...) I ... use rhetoric . . . to refer to the study of all areas of symbolic activity” (“The New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences,” n. d.).

Aristotle differs a little bit from Bazerman. Aristotle believes in actual performance as per the word or promise of a person or institution. W. Rhys Roberts translates Aristotle’s one of the definitions of rhetoric as “Rhetoric is useful (1) because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposite, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly” ([https://bocc.ubi.pt>page>Aristotle-rhetoric](https://bocc.ubi.pt/page/Aristotle-rhetoric)).

Aristotle’s and Bazerman’s theories have a common meeting point. It is moral obligation. According to one definition of “ethics”, it is as moral principles that control of influence a person’s behavior: professional/business/medical ethics and “ethical” as concerned with the beliefs and principles about what is right and wrong (Sally Wehmeier, 2005, p. 520).

When one discusses ethics, there are some boundaries. For honest delivery of the service, all involved parties must have to be honest. A study concludes that to ensure an ethical business communication, it needs the three basic elements, which are ethical individuals, ethical company leadership, and the appropriate policies and structures to support employees’ effort which must work in harmony (Bovee et al., 2016).

On Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Expressway/Fast Track (K-TME/KTFT)

There are many national pride mega and minor projects of the government of Nepal in the sector of physical infrastructure development. Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Fast Track (KTFT) and the Karnali Corridor (145 km) like some projects run under NA. In an article, it was informed that to complete KTFT project in time, MoPIT decides to handover the work to NA (Karna, April 2022). Karna further reminds that the ministry's report of the FY 2019/020 shows the progress of K-TME as 8.5 percent physical and 8.4 per cent the financial progresses including the completion of the detailed project report (DPR), 97 percent cutting down of the trees, 97 percent work of owing the land and 87 percent of earth moving. It also mentions the cent percent physical and the 96.43 percent financial progresses in the FY 2018/019. According to MoPIT, this expressway is of 76 km long in four lanes to be built during FY 2017/018 - FY 2022/023 with total cost of 175 thousand millions of Nepali rupees (NRs. 175,000,000,000/-). Since, some recent years have badly affected the condition of the world in the name of Pandemic COVID-19 so, the work is at slow progress. But it is noticeable that NA's work is still getting momentum in KTFT. Quoting KTFT chief, Vikash Pokharel, Khatiwada writes that, however the fast track has achieved the goal 16.10 percent in its last four years but again NA will accomplish the job by the fiscal year 2080/081 BS. In the light of late approval of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and the obstacle created by the local people at Khokana in the name of hyper tension of electricity, fast track, smart city, Bagmati Corridor, and the outer ring road around Kathmandu will not hamper KTFT, thus, the chief Pokharel is so confident about army's commitment to complete KTFT, however, the main construction of KTFT is still to be initiated (Khatiwada, February 23, 2022, pp. 11, 12).

In any another news, NA shows some serious concerns of the government of Nepal and the Nepali citizen. The army clarifies that the insufficient budget, the lack of facilitation in the works like dispute over Khokana-Bungmati, additional trees cutting and owing the public land for fast track will hamper the KTFT project to finish work in the fixed time by fiscal year 2023/024 A. D. Amidst such problems, the KTFT chief Vikash Pokharel recalls that while the project needs at least 40 to 50 thousand million rupees budget in the coming next three every fiscal years to complete the job in time, the government of Nepal allocates the budget just Nepali Rupees 8,968,800,000/- (about nine thousand million rupees budget) only in the last fiscal year 2021/022 A. D., which may be one of the causes to become late ("Fast Track: Three Challenges for Army to Accomplish by 081," 2022, p 3). This news further mentions that DPR shows the total cost with value added tax will go around 175,000,000,000/- (175 thousand million Nepali rupees, that is 1.75 billion rupees) but if the price hikes, it will reach up to 213,000,000,000/- (213 thousand million Nepali rupees, that is 2.13 billion rupees) and the army faces problem at Khokana as the public demands more compensation for providing land for fast track, and it is the reason that there is progress at that place just in the electric high tension and opening the fast track. However, NA has been doing afforestation for K-TME in the ratio of 1:25 ("Kathmandu-Terai Fast-track Difficult to Be Ready in Time," 2021, pp. 1, 2).

A Nepali vernacular, *Economic National Daily*, shows poor performance of the involved companies and then suspects that the fast track will be completed in time. It further writes that while KTFT publicizes the selected international construction company for the tunnel on the 25 December 2020 and the government of Nepal extends the tenure of 11 packages for next 6 months as per the cabinet decision of 23 June 2020; the 15 packages' work completion out of 30 packages from national construction professionals in the two consecutive FYs 2017/018 and 2018/019 is clear along with recommendation of the 4 ex-packages for penalization for the poor performance ("Kathmandu–Terai Fast-track Difficult to Be Ready in Time," 2021, pp. 1, 2). As there is 88.89 percent rest work for coming three years where the two FYs have been affected by COVID-19; 16 percent compensation of land is still in due; the project has still to recruit the national and international surveyor, counselor, constructor and such companies for EPC, sample preparation, construction and agreement; this *Economic National Daily* newspaper suspects the work completion in time in the very news. This suspicion seems correct even next year as many other newspapers make the disappointing news on the progress of K-TME and the direction to the KTFT project by the parliament of Nepal for due action to be taken. The army's problem that it faces at Khokana and other places and the government is unaware of the problems, a Nepali national vernacular daily, *The Nepal Top*, writes that parliamentary development and technology committee has directed the government to facilitate in the works of KTFT for management of its contract, cutting down the trees and the work of owing the public land ("Facilitate in the Construction of Terai-Madhesh Fast Track: Parliamentary Committee," 2022, p 2). There some unlawful works seem in the practice. Such unlawful act of any side will create a problem one day only. *Naya Patrika (The New Paper)*, refutes the action of army as it provides 4 to 7 additional number of days unlawfully to such two Chinese companies which are fail to appear before KTFT office within 15 days of the contract agreement (Letter of Acceptance), as per law of rule number 27 of the Public Purchase Act, Nepal- 2063 B. S. ("The Contract of 27 Thousand-Million Rupees in 'Fast Track' to the Company to Be Blacklisted," 2022, pp. 1, 2).

In any news, NA writes that due to Pandemic of COVID-19, the construction of the fast track is gaining its pace but it is slow. Its momentum is that the fast track project gets DPR and the appointments of the consultants in December of 2020. It is noticeable that, before DPR work in 2011, Nepal Army opens the track of the road (spotlight.com/2021/03/15/Kathmandu-teraimadhesh-expressway-fast-progress/). Before this news, KTFT project mentions like below. This shows that NA reaffirms its matter to gain public trust. K-TME building work gets initiation by the army in 2069 BS, however, MoPIT decides formally to handover this project to the army only on May 4, 2017 and the ministry materializes it accordingly on August 11, 2017 ("The Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Fast Track (Expressway) Road Project," 2020, pp.1).

A Glance at Some Other Projects

Referring to the director general Shiva Hari Sapkota's remarks of the Road Division in MoPIT that there are many reasons (like geographical difficulty in the mountain and so on)

why the progress of the seven total national pride road projects are slow. Let us see some word pictures of some projects in the news. A Nepali daily vernacular newspaper, *Nagarik*, mentions that the project Galchhee–Trishuli–Mailung–Syafubesi has achieved the goal only 21 km construction out of 82 km at the expenditure of 50 percent (Nepali rupees 820,000,000/-) in the first six months of the current fiscal year 2021/022 A. D.; under army duty the Karnali Corridor's (Hilsa-Simikot) tortoise's speed of progress is just opening of 2 km track (it was 135 Km track opened in the last fiscal year), which was initiated in the FY 2008/009 A. D. to be completed upto the FY 2013/014 A. D. but its completion duration, now, extended to 2022/023 A. D.; the North–South (Koshi) Highway utilizes just 15.25 percent of its total budget (Nepali rupees 159,000,000/-) by doing the gravel work and digging 148 km out of the targeted 162 km, the Kathmandu–Terai fast track just 16.9 percent, Pushpalal (Mid-mountain) Highway 24.1 percent, and Hulaki (Postal) Highway 38.3 percent (“Disappointing Progress of National Road Projects,” 2022, p. 7).

Not only the limited newspaper but some other news agencies also confirm the overall slow progress of the national and state pride construction of physical infrastructure in Nepal in the last fiscal year. They see the problems in multi sides. According to the Comptroller General Office of Nepal, the fiscal year 2021/022 A. D. shows only 18 percent of the total allocated budget (Nepali rupees 14,470,000,000/- out of Nepali rupees 80,105,100,000/-) aggregate used in seven months (by the end of Nepali month Magh 2078 B. S./February 12, 2022) by the 22 pride projects (“National Prides’ Budget Expenditure 18 Percent,” 2022, p. 5). This news gives the detail account like Pokhara regional airport (not expenditure at all), Budhi Gandaki Hydroelectricity project (no expenditure at all), President’s Chure Conservation Programme (12.3 percent expenditure), Melamchi Drinking Water Project (13.4 percent expenditure), Monorail Development Project (17.7 percent expenditure), Nijgadh International Airport (83.3 percent expenditure), Lumbini Development Trust/Fund (49.7 percent expenditure), Hulakee (Postal) Highway (42.4 percent expenditure), Mahakali Irrigation Project (34.7 percent expenditure), Babai Irrigation Project (24.1 percent expenditure), Sikta Irrigation (19.4 percent expenditure), Ranijamara Kulaliya Project (25.7 percent expenditure), Bheri-Babai Diversion Multipurpose Project (17.8 percent expenditure), Sunkosee Marine Diversion (33.6 percent expenditure), Pashupati Development Trust/Fund (26.1 percent expenditure), Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Fast Track (22.8 percent expenditure), Pushpalal Mid-mountain Highway (27.3 percent expenditure), and North-South Highway (Karnali, Kaligandaki and Kosee Corridor, 28.4 percent expenditure).

Pushpalal Highway’s news appears frequently in media. Its progress speed is also unsatisfactory. Giving detail of Pushpalal/Mid-mountain Highway (of total around 1,776 km total length), Guatam refers to the engineer Narayan Dutt Bhandari of the Parbat chief of this highway that despite of taking 24 years of long time, the local people of Baglung and at other places have to protest phase wise against the construction company for rapid work, however, the engineer Bhandari claims that the construction company is doing fast after frequent reminding of the duty (Gautam, February 21, 2022, p. 3). Gautam further writes

that Pushpalal Highway's two sectors, serially Baglung Bazar Uppalechaur–Akshate–Bihun and Bihun Ghodabandhe (25 km), had done agreement respectively to Indian Siddhi Sai JV (on January 28, 2018) and MP/SCF/ECC JV (on April 24, 2016) but the companies are not serious at work.

However, the state government's road construction is somewhat satisfactory as a whole. The army and the involved companies can get inspiration from such real exemplary works. Referring to the claims of the Far-Western State government of Nepal, Awinash Chaudhary mentions the black topping of 306 km road, gravelling of 295 km and soil road construction work of 320 km including State's pride Shajpur–Bogtan–Deepayal road's track opening (Chaudhary, February 24, 2022, p. 8). However, such claim is not always same as positive or negative. One can testify the truth by reading between the lines only. For example, while Chaudhary claims everything very progressing as per the government's report in the Far-Western State, Geeta Kunwar crosses such claim. Referring to a local (Deeli Raj Joshi), Kunwar writes about Seti Highway project in the same Far-Western State that the project's progress is very slow and it is an election agenda only for the political leaders because the budget is allocated every year but, despite local people's frequent delegation to the concerned authority, again no one listens to the grievance and the budget gets frozen (Kunwar, March 1, 2022, p. 7). Kunwar mentions that, according to the Seti Highway's Saanfebagar chief, Rajesh Kumar Yadav, this highway from Bauniya (Kailali) via Doti–Achham–Bajura to Chainpur (Bajhang)'s tree cutting work has not been started in lack of order of the higher authority and also the lack of facilitation work with the local and other leaders for rapid performance.

At the same time, Hilsa–Simkot tourist route from Piplang to Taanke (border to China) is facing another type of problem. The people of Changkheli Village (ward no. 5) and Nekpa (5) are desirous to draw the road through their villages while they are at different locations in the district. The project chief, Niraj Kumar Rajbanshi, has set out to find the solution (“Dispute Even in Road Construction,” 2022, pp. 13). In the same broad news of the *Gorkhapatra* daily governmental vernacular, the army is facing a new problem. It is geographical problem. Referring to the Major rank official, Dilli Ram Sapkota, an unnamed correspondent from Humla district mentions that around 35 army resources are carrying out the duty at Lalibagar by making their temporary residence at difficult place and the MI-17 helicopter is being used to carry out the explosives and other vehicles in Karnali corridor from Dullikuna to Lalibagar (Humla sector) (“Transportation of Road Construction through Helicopter,” 2022, pp. 13).

The ambitious Nepal–China–India tri-national road project (Upper part of Dolpa district in Nepal–Marim border of China–Indian border Rupaidiha) initiated from Nepali year 2057 B. S. has got very slow progress as it takes 7 years to open merely 700 metre track in the hard rock and 50 km construction work in 10 years. It seems that there is a bilateral issue of the involved countries. A news, according to Chief Minister of Karnali state of Nepal, Jeevan Bahadur Shahee, writes that as China has dug the road to its border from Chinese side hopefully and, since now, as it seems difficult from Chinese side to keep on the job, the

government considers to link Simkot (Humla) with Karnali Highway (“When Will Tri-national Road Be Built,” 2021, pp. 2).

In the light of such slow progress, the Bagmati State Government is to study and monitor the possible reasons behind those. This is, of course, not only the curiosity but the responsibility of the local leaders as well as the help to the concerned parties in construction work officially. As the pride declared works in Bhimphedi–Kulekhani Tunnel, Electric Bus Initiation and Electric Charging Station is zero and other such projects have very low progress report, the parliamentary committee of finance and development is to study and monitor the reasons of unsatisfactory progress of the projects (“Committee’s Interest in Pride Projects,” 2022, pp. 28).

Conclusion

Rhetorically, the symbolic language of army to show problems at Khokana and demanding more budget as well as asking for government’s support to resolve the seen obstacles is a grave indication of KTFT’s uncertainty work to be accomplished in time, if the army’s proposed conditions are not being fulfilled by the governments. Now, if the army unfinishes the fast track work as per its conditions afore mentioned, and also if the local people do not cooperate the army in the construction work; the two rhetoric theories of Charles Bazerman and Aristotle get proved here. Hence, all the involved parties in KTFT (army; the local, state and union federal governments; the companies, and the local people all) will be unethical also for Wehmeier and Bovee et all.

From above vital discussion, it is noticeable that like many of the other national pride construction projects, the army is facing a lot of challenges while constructing K-TME/KTFT which the army cannot solve all those problems itself. There are some problems to be resolved by the government of Nepal and by the honest and moral fast activities of the involved companies in KTFT. While selecting the companies for KTFT, the ‘behaviourism’ is more dominating the army than existing ‘rule and laws’. In some other cases, while Seti Highway is facing the political and bilateral obstacle between two countries is on the surface at local level; Karnali corridor from Dullikuna to Lalibagar (Humla sector) is facing the geographical difficulty where the army has to use helicopter for explosive and light vehicle carrying, and Hilsa-Simkot Tourist Route is facing ambitious problems of the local people as many different villagers want the route should pass through their village then through another village (tug-of-war). Among such loops from different sides, the parliamentary board of the state government somewhere has begun the study and monitoring work or the pride projects which is highly appreciable. Since KTFT is not facing the border dispute or two countries’ bilateral issues, the tug-of-war problem about the passing route through this village and that village, and also army’s work is highly appreciable in such works in the other project as per its institutional positive image, the KTFT’s local problems can be resolved, if all the concerned parties are rhetorical and ethical to finish the fast track in time. Therefore, this research article suggests some points.

Some Suggestions

- i. The government of Nepal should allocate the sufficient budget to the army for KTFT construction in time.
- ii. To resolve the dispute at Khokana (Kathmandu Valley) related to land acquisition from public, compensation and local people's demand of more compensation should all be helped resolved by the government agencies at central and local levels.
- iii. The selection of companies for different works in the construction of K-TME should be as per the global practice, that is, in a normal open competition in which all of the interested parties can participate transparently. At the place of rule and laws, behaviourism is gone matter. Only rule should be followed to honour the democratic parliamentary concerns.
- iv. The cutting down of the trees for the fast track can become rapid if the bilateral rigorous and the continuous talk takes place among environmentalists, army and the local people in the facilitation of the government agencies. The more number of planting trees like lucrative proposal and ensuring them for the proposal will satisfy the local people and the environment agencies to cooperate the army.
- v. Local and other leaders' ownership will be helpful to sort out the local hindrances at particular place.
- vi. The financial and development parliamentary boards of the state and federal union parliaments should study time and again about the reasons of progress or slow progress of the work.

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