

(Almost) Everything I've Learned About Nepali Literature is Wrong

By Manjushree Thapa



My journey to learn about Nepali literature began when I began to write in the early 1990's. Because I was not fluent in the Nepali language at the time, I turned to the few English-language resources I could find, starting with Michael Hutt's *Himalayan Voices*. They accurately reflected the literary canon, and later, when I began to read Nepali writers and critics, I learned about the history of Nepali literature as it is still taught today in school and college curricula.

Only later, once I learned of the language rights movement, did I realize that the framing of Nepali literature has been exclusionary, focusing almost entirely on the literature that has been produced in the Nepali language. Nepal's civil rights movement, which was sparked in the 1950s but which came into its own after 1990, altered my consciousness. I have come around to believe that in a nation with—at current count—123 languages, it is not possible to conflate Nepali-language literature with Nepal's literature. In my talk I will address the need to reframe our understanding of the literary history of Nepal.

Manjushree Thapa writes fiction and nonfiction, and translates Nepali literature into English. Her fiction include *All of Us In Our Own Lives* and *Seasons of Flight*. Manjushree's most recent nonfiction book is *The Lives We Have Lost*. She has translated Indra Bahadur Rai's novel *Aaja Ramita Chha* into English. Her essays and editorials have appeared in *New York Times*, *London Review of Books*, *Newsweek*, *Globe and Mail*. She is a Founding Member of Martin Chautari. More at www.manjushreethapa.com

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