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Role of classification scheme in organizing Nepali literature in the libraries: A survey

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Abstract

Classification of any documents has played a vital role in the existence of a subject, more the works are classified more its existence is valued and used. There is a significant number of collections of Nepali literature in the libraries of Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Nepal and these documents need to be treated and organized in proper order. The main objective of this paper is to find the organization of Nepali documents and the contribution of classification schemes to classify the documents. The paper also aims to study the possibilities in the expansion of this particular topic in the Dewey decimal classification system.

Keywords: Nepali literature classification, library classification, Dewey decimal classification

Introduction

Organizing any materials or keeping them in order is an important task in the library and all books and other materials that are stored need to be arranged appropriately. Classification means grouping similar things together and in the library it makes it easier while arrange and shelve books. It not only group similar things together but even help us to understand the relationship between the subjects and the differences. It brings similar subjects together and places them in proper order and helps in retrieving books and other materials easily. The documents that are placed on shelves of the library have to be classified appropriately and access easily. According to Henry Evelyn Bliss (1933) ^[1] classification of books is a structural organization of knowledge, if it's well constructed, it will serve with maximum efficiency in grouping and regrouping of subjects with probable requirements. Before the traditional classification system such as Dewey decimal classification, Universal Decimal Classification, colon Classification, etc. Was developed, the books used to be stored in closed stacks and organized according to the idea or knowledge of the library in charge. After the classification system was developed and applied by different libraries over time there has been a drastic change in classifying the documents and in the process of shelving them in stacks.

In the libraries where the Nepali documents are found, most of them are classified according to the Dewey decimal classification system. The libraries are using either the 19th edition or 23rd edition of DDC and a few libraries where the schemes are not applied are arranging their books according to subject wise or author wise. To achieve the advancement of the system in the libraries different programs from training their staff to arranging workshops are organized. With some of these practices, the system of regulating and managing the library has changed a lot. Classification plays a significant role in organizing, arranging, and retrieving the library materials and to classify there are many classification schemes such as DDC, UDC, CC, LCC, etc., and in most of the schemes it is found that the developing and underdeveloped subjects are neglected. DDC is being developed by Western authors the contribution to Western knowledge has been provided sufficiently but lacks in providing adequate knowledge for Eastern and Oriental languages and literature.

Objectives

This study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To perceive the available resources and the total number of collections of Nepali documents in the libraries.

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2. To find the classification schemes being used to organize Nepali documents in the library.
3. If the classification schemes are not being followed how they are arranging the books in the library.
4. To find whether the standard classification scheme used in the library serves the purpose of classification in regard to the library collection of Nepali literature.

Review of literature

Libraries in Darjeeling have a huge collection of Nepali Documents. Some documents are classified according to the classification schemes and those who are not classified according to the classification schemes are classified according to the whims of the library in charge, author-wise, size-wise, and publication-wise. Comaromi & Satija (1985)^[3] has briefly discussed about the popularity of the DDC and its negligence to the third-world subjects. To every form, from art, literature, culture, religion, philosophy, folklore, etc. there has to be the division of classes according to its existence. DDC somehow lacks to accommodate these facts but as time passes by there have been surveys and report been prepared to which the acceptance towards the non-western languages are made and similarly, the classes that needs to be accommodated are being made through the time according to their relevancy. From the first edition of DDC (1876) with 44 pages of pamphlets it has grown to the vast edition. Through time there are many changes and revision as there is an ever-growing knowledge and by the laws and principles every document has to get its unique place while classifying. Vaidya (2004)^[10] has discussed the technical processing for the management of the library collection at Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL) that the author, titles, subject indexes are maintained in the public catalogue cards which are the main retrieving information tools for library use. As the eastern and oriental languages and literature are not well classified and expanded in DDC many classifiers and researchers found it biased and due to the lack of classification notations in the standard classification scheme they tried to create new classification schemes keeping DDC as a base. Taylor (2006)^[12] explains the importance of DDC and its logical approach to a hierarchical categorization with the purpose of expounding knowledge organization and tries to emphasis on the teaching of creating call numbers by adding Cutter numbers to the DDC notations. Mai (2014)^[7] discusses about the modernity of library classification, the changes that have been accompanied through the time in the classification system and the shift that have taken in, conception of a universe of knowledge from an essentialistic to pluralistic, because of which it results in ill-fated situation faced by the libraries. Golub *et al.* (2014)^[13] discusses about the potential of Dewey Decimal Classification to establish a knowledge organization system for enhancing social tagging to improve the subject indexing and information retrieval. Suresha & Narayanaswamy (2016)^[8] describes that DDC is continuously revised to keep pace with knowledge accommodating new topics, as well as revising the old one. It

is very important to cope up with the pace of increasing universe of knowledge and has also made the discussion about the modification revised version of 23rd edition and its features, updates and subscription information.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study survey method has been used, to understand the problem and gap related to the classification of Nepali literature, related Literature were also collected. To know more about the structural change made in similar topic, a comprehensive study has been done through various journal articles, conference papers, these and dissertation and the information available in the internet. The study mostly covers DDC 18th to 23rd edition, as the existence of Nepali literature can be traced from the 18th edition of the Dewey decimal classification system.

Nepali language and literature

In DDC, the classification of literature is mainly based on language and literary forms such as poetry, drama, fiction, etc. Through time there are many changes and evolvement in the particular class of literature. The biasness among the Western and non-western languages can be clearly seen in DDC. Nepali literature is very much dependent on language, initially Nepali language was known as 'Gorkhali' or 'Khas' language, it got its name 'Nepali' after the then king Prithivi Narayan Shah united the country. Nepali literature also has a very long history but due to insufficient research it is difficult to trace the exact advent. Previously, Nepalese writings were written in Sanskrit and Newari languages and later on the translation of Sanskrit scripture, biographies, medicinal treatises, religious writings, etc. into the Nepali language has been recorded since the eighteenth century. We can assume that Nepali literature is a very new phenomenon in literature as compared to other languages of the region. The nineteenth century can be marked as the emergence of Nepali literature, though there were few other writers who worked on Nepali literature before but the eminent poet of Nepali literature Bhanu Bhakta Acharya translated the Hindu epic 'Ramayana' into Nepali language and played a fundamental role in developing Nepali literature and brought it into existence. Nepali is an Indo-Aryan language and a sub-branch of the Pahari language and is spoken by 17 million people in Nepal and its neighbouring countries like India and Bhutan. In India, Nepali language has official status in Sikkim and in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong Districts of West Bengal. It is now the official language (since 1958 B.S.) and Lingua Franca of Nepal and one of the 22 Scheduled languages in India.

Total library collection and the collection of Nepali literature

For this study data are collected from eighteen libraries where the classification of Nepali literature has been done. The collection in these libraries are observed and the classification of the documents are analyzed.

Table 1: Total library collection and the collection of Nepali literature

Sl. No.	Name of the libraries	Total number of collections	Total number of Nepali books
1	Bloomfield Library	19,671	8,753
2	Bijanbari Degree College	2000	1500
3	Deshbandhu Govt. District Library	70,053	15,221
4	Darjeeling Government College	80,000	6,000
5	Gorubathan Government College	4,203	526
6	Gorkha Library	4,500	4,500
7	Govt. General Degree College, Pedong	4,324	470
8	Kalimpong College	21,000	3,000
9	Kurseong College	23,509	4,505
10	North Bengal University	2,51,054	21,467
11	Siliguri College	45,164	4,748
12	Teesta-Indus Sikkim University Central Library	50,000	2,350
13	Sonada Degree College	4,386	1,780
14	Southfield College	35,000	4,000
15	St. Josephs' College	53,932	4,510
16	Tribhuvan University Central Library	4,50,000	1,50,000
18	The National Library of India	2.2 million	1500

In most of the libraries it is observed that the DDC 19th edition is being used and in few 23rd edition of DDC to classify the documents. Among the libraries that have been survey, the highest number of collections of Nepali materials were found in Tribhuvan University Central Library with a collection of 1,50,000 materials, in North Bengal University it is 21,467, in Deshbandhu Government District library it is 15,221 and so on as mentioned in the above table. With the documents collected and being published frequently in Nepali language it was felt that it is high time to evaluate the classification of these documents in proper order.

Findings

Nepali books are classified according to the Dewey decimal classification system 19th or 23rd edition in most of the libraries, the books that are classified has placed under the class number 891.49 in 19th edition and 891.495 in 23rd edition. The relocation of Nepali literature has been done in the 21st edition of Dewey decimal classification, as 891.495. In DDC, literature as the main class has been placed under 800, and there is an expansiveness in library classification for the European Literature from 810-889 but for the Literature that comes under 890 i.e. 'Literature of other specific languages and language families' is yet to be developed and explored. Nepali literature being one of the Literature that falls under the class 890 'Literature of other specific languages and language families' and further summarized under 891 'East Indo-European and Celtic Literature' has to be more summarized and classified.

Further, in the existing classification system the literary forms numbers are added from the Table 3, i.e. Subdivisions for Individual Literature for Specific Literary Forms. The standard subdivision as instructed in the DDC 23rd edition are as follows.

- 01–09 [Standard subdivisions; collections of literary texts in more than one form; history, description, critical appraisal of works in more than one form]
- Poetry
- Drama
- Fiction
- Essays
- Speeches
- Letters
- Humor and satire
- Miscellaneous writing

In addition to these literary forms and the author's first three letters or the author's surname's first three letters Nepali literature are classified. It is also found that the call number of Nepali documents differ from each other libraries. According to the reliability and to avoid the complication the library in charge has tried to classify the documents. The main reason of allocating different call numbers to the same documents in different library is due to the lack of expansiveness in particular sub-class. Due to the lack of uniformity a particular document is being classified with different call number in different libraries.

When the participants were asked whether the standard classification scheme serves the purpose of classifying Nepali documents or not, most of the participants responded that to some extent it serves the purpose but sometimes felt difficult. For Nepali literature, they felt that the extension in DDC is required as there are many of Knowledge evolving and the new documents need to be classified appropriately, but due to the lack of extension in particular class it is compelled to classify the documents by taking the number from Nepali literature i.e. 891.49 along with the table 3 and the first three letters of author's name. One of the respondents even said that standard classification schemes are biased to the Western influences and this may be the reason that the Nepali literature and the other Indian Literature are not adequately addressed. Adjoining all the responses it was observed that the standard classification systems has provided very limited space for Nepali literature.

Solution to the problem in classifying Nepali documents

The respondent has also given few suggestions to solve the problem while classifying Nepali documents. Most of them suggested amendment and expansion in the existing standard classification system can be helpful to classify the Nepali documents. In the figure mentioned below it is shown that most of the respondent agreed with the amendment and expansion of the existing standard classification scheme. As there are no alternative classification scheme for the Nepali documents, the documents whatever are classified has faced some difficulties but still they can be solved by expanding the classification system. When asked about devising the new classification scheme, most of them did not agreed as in most of the libraries the Nepali documents are already classified according to DDC and in few libraries they have just started to classify the documents according to DDC. So, creating or

devising a new classification scheme will be hectic and time consuming, as suggested by the respondents.

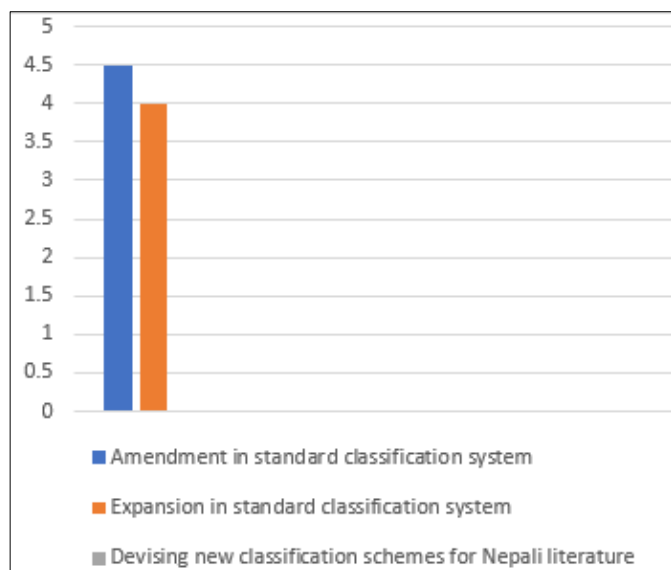


Fig 1: In the figure mentioned below it is shown that most of the respondents agreed with the amendment and expansion of the existing standard classification scheme

Conclusion

The data collected for this study showed that the classification of Nepali literature in the libraries is collected adequately and these documents need to be classified appropriately. While classifying, problems are faced, as the standard classification system has not provided proper extensions that are required while classifying Nepali documents. There is no standard or uniform practice among the libraries to classify materials on Nepali Documents. Different suggestions are also given by the librarians to solve this problem, such as amendment and expansion of the standard classification system, which can sort the problem to some extent. While collecting data it is also observed that there is a huge collection of Nepali documents, to accommodate the ever-growing knowledge it is very important to revise and expand the existing classification scheme.

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