

WOLFGANG MIEDER

*Sitting in My House Dreaming of Nepal. Nepal Through the Eyes of Its Proverbs.* By Valerie M. Inchley. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ekta Books, 2010. Pp. 521.

Outside of the fascinating country of Nepal in the Himalayas between northern India and Tibet very little has hitherto been known about the rich treasure trove of Nepali proverbs. In fact, my two-volume *International Bibliography of Paremiology and Phraseology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009) with its over 10,000 scholarly publications on proverbs does not have a single entry on Nepal, Nepalese or Nepali in its subject index! However, my recently published *International Bibliography of Paremiography. Collections of Proverbs, Proverbial Expressions and Comparisons, Quotations, Graffiti, Slang, and Wellerisms* (Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2011) with its 3,615 entries reflecting the holdings of my International Proverb Archives lists at least a small collection of Nepali proverbs that appeared in Kesar Lall's *Nepalese Customs and Manners* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1990), pp. 62-72. But most significantly, it also references Valerie M. Inchley's truly unique and most welcome massive volume *Sitting in My House Dreaming of Nepal. Nepal Through the Eyes of Its Proverbs* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Ekta Books, 2010) that is the topic of my present review. I will never forget my scholarly pleasure and excitement when Dr. Inchley, a retired medical doctor from the United Kingdom, who lived and worked in Nepal for many years, sent me her invaluable book between the publication of my two bibliographies just mentioned. Let it be said right at the beginning of my review that Valerie Inchley's book is a definite *magnum opus* on the little known Nepali proverbs, and what is more, it represents a perfect model for the combined paremiographical and paremiological approach to the study of proverbs. While it is an expertly organized and annotated proverb collection with English translations and equivalents, it is also a most informative scholarly investigation of Nepali proverbs. As such, this voluminous book is indeed

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a milestone for the collection and study of Nepali proverbs that belongs into all major libraries of the world.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters with many Nepali proverbs with English translations and equivalents being presented and analyzed. Following a page of acknowledgements and a foreword (pp. v-viii) where the authors describes her fascination with the Nepali language, culture, and folklore in general and traditional Nepali proverbs in particular, she begins her book with an introductory chapter (pp. 1-13) outlining her motivation, aims, strategy, significance, problems (primarily of a linguistic nature), and results of her comprehensive work that in its manuscript form was considerably longer than what is presented in the final publication of her wealth of materials. This is followed by the second chapter (pp. 14-45) that presents a complete literature review (annotated bibliography!) of her primary and secondary sources of Nepali proverbs together with numerous references to English and international proverb scholarship. The thirty-six primary sources of previously published Nepali proverb collections of various scopes yielded her major paremiographical corpus, that is the Nepali proverbs were not collected by way of anthropological or folkloric field research. It should also be mentioned that Inchley, who has a masterful command of the standard Nepali language, stayed away from including proverbial texts from the various dialects spoken in Nepal. As it is, she researched, assembled, and studied about 11,000 Nepali proverbs of which she has included the most common and representative 450 texts (counting variants actually 1,200 proverbs) in her intriguing analysis.

The third chapter (pp. 46-61) looks at proverbs as part of folklore, indicating that they not only reflect generalized views of human life but that they are also related to myths, legends, fables, allegories, and parables. They also contain symbols, metaphors, and various linguistic matters such as colloquialisms, idioms, slang, and at times vulgar language. In the fourth chapter (pp. 62-84) this is developed further by looking at the various figures of speech employed in Nepali proverbs, as for example simile, metaphor, parallelism, personification, anthropomorphism, metonymy, synecdoche, euphemism, hyperbole, antithesis, paradox, oxymoron, alliteration, anaphora, onomatopoeia, pun, etc. By once again citing ample Nepali and English proverbs, it is made clear that the proverbs of Ne-

pal follow linguistic and poetic forms that are part and parcel of proverbial language throughout the world. The fifth chapter (pp. 85-119) continues in this vein by the attempt of an inclusive proverb definition, stressing such aspects as shortness, pithiness, simplicity, traditionality, popularity, wisdom, truth, contradiction, (apparent) universality, (unknown) origin, and memorability. The author also deals with various related terms for proverb (saying, dictum, mot, gnome, saw, adage, apothegm, maxim, byword, etc.) and a number of connected genres (aphorism, epigram, riddle, idiom, etc.). The sixth chapter (pp. 120-130) zeroes in on how idioms and riddles in particular are related to proverbs, something that has been of interest to paremiologists for quite some time. The interrelationship of proverbs and riddles in particular deserves more attention by paremiologists, but this is also true for jokes that employ proverbs. All of the points raised throughout these four chapters are underscored by numerous Nepali proverbs cited in their original language with English translations and including similar English proverbs.

Next Valerie Inchley presents a detailed analysis on proverb structures in the seventh chapter (pp. 131-180), including the classical bi-partite structure of proverbs commonly referred to as parallelism, but there are, of course, also many short and long proverbs that do not follow this classical structure. The difference that exists between Nepali and English proverbs is primarily due to the different syntactical rules, but in general things are quite similar between these two so unrelated languages. This is also true for the proverb style that is discussed in the eighth chapter (pp. 181-198). Proverbs of both languages can have various lengths, they may be literal or metaphorical, and they might exhibit prosaic or poetic language, with parallelism, rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia being most prevalent. Nepali proverbs are, however, more often presented as questions, a stylistic feature that is rather rare in English. The ninth chapter (pp. 199-219) is one more primarily paremiological section of this massive book before its author turns to a systemized paremiographical presentation of her vast corpus of Nepali proverbs. Here she deals with the vexing problem of the appropriate classification of proverbs, mentioning such classificatory schemes as by structure, purpose (didactic, humorous), age, origin, distribution, and subject. It should be noted that Inchley does include a short statement on "Modern or New Proverbs" (pp. 210-212), clearly indicating that new proverb continue to be formulated and accepted

by Nepali speakers. In yet another small section on “Foreign Language Proverbs” (pp. 215-216) the point is made that English as the *lingua franca* of the world is having at least some influence by Anglo-American proverbs being loan translated into Nepali. Regarding her preferred classification by subject, the author argues that “it is important that within the category of subject, both the obvious and hidden subject sub-headings are kept in mind and that any classification includes adequate cross-referencing. Thus animal proverbs will often be cross-referenced with family and social relationship proverbs and both can be identified by key words like love, anger, selfishness, laziness etc. I therefore present a dual topic / key-word classification” (p. 218).

Consequently, the tenth chapter (pp. 220-328) presents numerous selected Nepali proverbs with English translations and English examples according to sixteen main subject headings and multiple sub-headings, always indicating how many proverbs of the 11,000 texts fall under each of the (sub)sections: 1. Historical Proverbs, 2. Religious Proverbs (Scriptures, Gods, Heroes, Saints, Festivals, Beliefs, Religious Places), 3. Political Proverbs, 4. Philosophical Proverbs, 5. Moral & Ethical Proverbs, 6. Proverbs about People, 7. Proverbs about the Body (Head & Body, Face, Eyes, Ears, Nose & Mouth, Arms & Legs, Internal Organs including Heart, External Organs – Skin & Hair), 8. Proverbs about Family Life (Husband & Wife, Parents & Children, Siblings, Youth & Age, Grandparents & Grandchildren, In-Laws, Other Relationships), 9. Proverbs about Food (Rice & Bread, Dairy Products, Vegetables & Curry, Meat & Fish, Sugar, Honey & Sweets, Puddings & Pies, Fruit & Nuts, Drinks, Salt & Spices, Cooking, Meals & Guests), 10. Proverbs about Tribes & Castes (Caste Hierarchy, Caste & Craft, National & International Relations, Village Living & Leadership), 11. Proverbs about Village Life (Friends & Neighbours, Village Living and Leadership), 12. Proverbs about Farming & Agriculture, 13. Proverbs about Fauna (Animals, Birds, Fish & Reptiles, Insects), 14. Proverbs about Flora, 15. Proverbs about Natural Features & Seasons (Elements, Natural Features & Places, Agricultural Places, Times of Day, Days & Months, Seasons & Weather), and 16. Geographical Proverbs (National Places, International Places). As Inchley explains so convincingly: “The apparent or immediately obvious subject usually relates to the cultural context and origin of

the proverbs, and so tells us a lot about the country – its history, religion and traditions and the people – their lifestyle and relationships. However, it still does not necessarily indicate the meaning of the proverbs. This may be hidden in metaphorical allusions, which is one reason why we need to search for key words to explain proverbs” (p. 328).

It is the eleventh chapter (pp. 329-371) in which the author presents at least some of her many texts according to proverb key words: Values & Virtues (God/s & Human, Righteousness & Unrighteousness, Fortunate & Unfortunate, Truth & Lies, Good & Bad, Joy & Trouble, Love & Hate, Peace & Quarreling, Patience & Wrath, Wise & Foolish, Learning & Ignorance, Obedience & Disobedience, Forethought & Carelessness, Civilized & Uncivilized, Strength & Weakness, Rich & Poor, Giving & Receiving, Contentment & Jealousy, Generosity & Meanness, Hard-Work & Laziness, Success & Failure, Bravery & Cowardice, Humility & Pride, Altruism & Selfishness, Hope & Despair, Light & Darkness, Young & Old, Man & Woman), and Other Key Words (Blindness / Disability, Experience, Discipline, Fear, Faith, Shame). This classification attempt, again with but a small portion of her many texts in their original language, English translation, and some English examples, is summarized as follows: “Key word categorisation is helpful because it has the potential to show what is the real or deeper meaning behind each proverb. However, if the key word is not actually included in the vocabulary of the proverb, it can only be deduced by taking into account the structure, style, purpose, age/origin and cultural context of a proverb. Even then, as several scholars have pointed out, the meaning of a proverb can change depending on the circumstances under which it is employed. It is also important to remember that the use of irony can reverse what seems to be the literal meaning of a proverb” (p. 371). Indeed, as is well known among paremiologists, proverbs can only properly be understood and studied by considering the polysemanticity, polysituativity, and polyfunctionality.

The following twelfth chapter (pp. 372-382) is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the ubiquitous problem of misogynous proverbs and the other with the issue that proverbs can contradict each other. Much has been written on proverbs against women or on contradictory proverb pairs, and it comes as no surprise that these matters also appear in the Nepali proverb corpus. The even short-

er thirteenth and concluding chapter (pp. 383-388) stresses that proverbs continue to be in frequent use among the Nepali population today. The author also summarizes her entire book in a few paragraphs, and as one would expect from such a magisterial study, she concludes with a comprehensive bibliography (pp. 491-521) that is of greatest value to international proverb studies. But there is one more incredibly important section that deserves special mention and sincere praise, name the invaluable “List of Common Nepali Proverbs” (pp. 389-490). It is on these one hundred pages (!) where Valerie Inchley presents the paremiological minimum of 452 proverbs of the Nepali language in the form of a table that lists the following information in seven columns for each proverb: 1. consecutive proverb number (from 1 to 452), 2. the Nepali proverb in its original language, 3. the frequency with which these proverbs occurred in the master list of thirty-six printed sources, 4. literal English translation of the proverb, 5. the meaning/context of the proverb, 6. English equivalents, and 7. Nepali variants. From this we can see that the following proverbs belong to the best known and most popular stock of Nepali proverbs (cited here only in English translation):

Genuine gold doesn't need testing.  
 A dog stricken by a firebrand is frightened of the lightning.  
 The chopping block knows the pain of the chopping block.  
 Lazy in the thighs, gourmet in the tongue.  
 If no mango falls, all that will be lost is a stick.  
 Keep gazing into the sky for fruit until you die.  
 Without dying yourself you cannot see heaven.  
 To him who is good, the world is good.  
 Not seeing the buffalo [walking] on his own back but seeing the lice  
 [walking] on another's back.  
 Close the mouth of your purse well, don't blame your friend.  
 Having eaten (only) potatoes but bragging about sweetmeat.  
 Describing heaven to Indra (King of heaven)  
 The fish that escaped was big.  
 One ear, two ears and the wide field (world).  
 One drop dries up; 100 drops make a brook.  
 A guest for a day may eat the best; the guest for two days had better  
 go elsewhere.

One path, two jobs.  
One hand cannot clap.  
A run-down tiger is chased even by a calf.  
Give him a finger and he will swallow your fist.  
Sometimes it is the turn of the mother-in-law; sometimes that of the  
daughter-in-law.  
The crow goes on cawing, grains go on drying.  
The crow is neither happy nor unhappy at the ripening of the wood-  
apple.  
It makes no difference to a one-eyed ox whether it is the full moon  
or the new moon.  
Black letters look like buffaloes.  
Like lending meat to the dog.  
What do you seek, blind man? Eyes, of course!  
He who wants to eat is not stopped by his moustache.  
If the house is burnt there is no trouble about ashes.  
He who rides a horse, falls.  
While I have grain, everyone is for me. As soon as I have none, they  
are all gone.  
Beat the daughter, scare the daughter-in-law.  
He who extracts the honey licks his hand.  
He who is down has a stake thrust in his mouth.  
The curse of a fly doesn't kill an ox.  
The partridge's enemy is its mouth.  
One should tolerate the kick of a milch cow.  
Ask not the way to the village where you do not intend to go.  
An insignificant stream can carry away.  
A one-eyed uncle is better than no uncle.  
A bad dancer blames the courtyard.  
After killing the mongoose, regret.  
To go to the temple of Pashupati and sell dried fishes.  
Sin shouts from the housetop.  
The monkey's tail is neither a stick nor a weapon.  
Coconut in the hands of a monkey.  
An old tiger and a young jackal (are never a match).  
How would the Brahman know the taste of mushroom since he  
never eats it?  
In the rush for the wedding, they forgot to ask for the girl's hand.  
A gourd in a goat's mouth.  
A glib tongue can sell corn flour; a dumb man cannot even sell rice.

Even the devil slaves for the fortunate.  
 A barking dog does not bite.  
 The sheep will go with the sheep and the goat with the goat.  
 How can the horn be a burden to the buffalo?  
 I (myself) aim at the log but the axe hits the knee.  
 Pulling a creeper may precipitate a landslide.  
 When the bulls fight, the calves get trampled upon.  
 You cannot get ghee out with a straight finger.  
 Waste is the work of haste.  
 The elephant got through but its tail got stuck.  
 A plant with smooth leaves has promise, one with rough ones has  
 not.  
 Save your life from a mob; save the seed during a famine.

As can be seen from this small florilegium of Nepali proverbs in English translation, some of them are basically identical to well-known European proverbs. But as expected, most of them are quite different and at times their metaphorical messages are hard or impossible to understand without knowledge of the culture, folklore, history, language, religion, worldview, etc. of Nepal. But now, due to Valerie Inchley's paremiological and paremiographical masterpiece *Sitting in My House Dreaming of Nepal. Nepal Through the Eyes of Its Proverbs*, a new knowledge of the Nepali society is available to people interested in this great country. Proverbs, to be sure, play a major role in making this possible, and Valerie M. Inchley is to be congratulated on her much needed and appreciated study and collection of the proverbs of Nepal.

Wolfgang Mieder  
 Department of German and Russian  
 422 Waterman Building  
 University of Vermont  
 85 South Prospect Street  
 Burlington, Vermont 05405  
 USA  
 E-mail: Wolfgang.Mieder@uvm.edu