



Review of 'Madhesh' Definition Found in the Nepal Academy Dictionary

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Abstract

The Terai belt in Nepal's southern part is also called Madhesh/Madesh. However, According to the Nepal Academy, it is an old area between the Himalayas, the Bindhyachal Mountains, and the lowlands between Kurukshetra and Prayagraj. Furthermore, the dictionary compared the Madhesh of Nepal with Madhya Pradesh of India. This term then perplexes the readers. Nepal's political struggle of the same name has grown. Whether or not this definition is accurate. Whether an update is necessary or not. The author will present his viewpoint by reviewing numerous supporting evidence in this article. Based on a thematic analysis of the data, this article evaluates the accuracy of this definition. The study examined secondary data drawn from history and mythology. The findings do not support the definition of the Nepal Academy lexicon, necessitating a new understanding. This review argues that the Madesh/Madhesh was descended from the Shaivites of ancient Matsya Desh, Mlheccha Desh, and Magadh Desh. According to this assessment, the Madhesh/Madesh in Nepal is not synonymous with Madhya Pradesh in India.

Keywords: Madhesh, Terai, Dictionary, Matsya, Mleccha, Magadh, Nepal, India.

INTRODUCTION

The southern plains of Nepal are known as Aul, Madesh, Madhesh, and Terai. Informally, people from those areas are known as Madese, Madise, Madhese, and Madhise. These are all examples of public speaking noises. The region became involved in Nepali politics in the 1970s to establish its identity as Madhesh and Madhesi. Curiosity grows as to the origins of the Madhesh term with a little different spelling and sound than public speaking.

The Nepal Academy's dictionary describes Madhesh/Madesh as follows: 1. Terai, Madhesh, plains, low region is free of hills and mountains. 2. The old name of flatland is formally located south of the Himalayas and north of the Vindhya mountains. The plain area is east of Kurukshetra and west of Prayag, Madhya Pradesh (Nepal Academy, 2010).

The term Madhesh used in the academy's dictionary refers to physical features of the plains, not only Nepal's country as such but rather the vast area of India. As a result, curiosity develops. Nepal's Terai belt has an average breadth of 26-32 kilometres whereas India covers thousands of kilometres (ForestryNepal, 2022; Britannica, 2009).

The Nepal Academy's (2010) definition has produced absurd answers because it is unclear whether the region is defined as being between Nepal and India when seeking Madhesh. To find Madhesh, one needs to travel across the plains to Vindhyachal as per the dictionary. In other words, the term "Madhesh" encompasses the Indian plains up to Madhya Pradesh.

After all, why would Nepal Academy adopt such a faulty definition? Why hasn't it been updated in so long? The question has arisen. As a result, it must be discussed in depth.

Background

Let's check other vocabularies as well for the definition of Madhesh. One will also come across Madhesh searching for a name on the website. For example, a Hindu divinity is called Madhesh (Hamriweb, 2010). The Madhesh is described as Mahadev Shiva Mahesh in Babinology Vocabulary, another nomenclature dictionary (Babynology, 2020). It suggests that Madhesh has long been Mahadeva Shiva's ancestral home or cultural influence.

There is no evidence in ancient Indian and Nepali literature or practice that the term Madhesh referred to Vindhya Parvat in India's northern plains. As a result, the concept of Nepal Academy has left readers perplexed. Therefore, scholars must explore this term's definition thoroughly.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Madhesh's Mythological and Historical Backdrop

Racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin is ethnicity. It categorizes persons according to their regular expression and identity. Conversely, race is a restricted term that refers to similar physical and biological qualities (Morin, 2020). As a result, I understand that the Kirat name refers to an ethnicity, not only a racial manifestation.

According to Markendey Puran, the seven prominent Kirat Kingdoms during Mahabharat time were Aswakut or Kabul, Kulya or Kulu valley, Matsya or North Bihar, Paundra or Bengal, Sumer or Assam, Malak or Mlek or Lohit, Kinner or Garhwal, and Nepal (Avasthi, 1942). During the time of Mahabharat, the plain land of Nepal, located in North Bihar, was known as Matsya Desh. According to this source, Matsya Desh made it easy to refer to persons as Madesh/Madhesh.

According to Kirat history, the Kirat monarchy contained the Khambos or Khamboja, Yaven or Greek, Saka or Scythian, Pallava or Perthian peoples (Chemjong, 2003). The five Pandavas, according to Chemjong, spent years disguised at the court of Kirat King Virat in Nepal's Terai region. Before the Aryans arrived, Kirat rulers ruled over every hamlet in North Bihar, North Bengal, and Assam. Aryan referred to the Kirat people and area as Mlhechha resided in Mlhechha country. It is therefore straightforward to deduce that Aryan employed the noun Mlhechha, from which people spoke Mlhechha Desh, Medesh, and Madhesh.

During the post-Vedic period, the Kuru region was known as Matsya Desh. The Matsya Desh expanded to North Bihar during the Mahabharata period (Chemjong, 2003). The ancient Matsya Desh area is included in the Academy's definition of Madhesh.

Remains from the Mahabharat time

Madan Mohan Mishra (2013), an associate professor at L.N. Mithila University, has written about the ruins of the Mahabharata-era Matsya monarch Virat's palace in the Nepal-India Jogbani border area in an essay. He has urged that when governments establish commercial ports, the region's old heritage not be damaged for prosperity. He has also emphasized the importance of safeguarding the area. According to Mishra, the Matsya Desh's great king's dominion is now part of the boundary between Nepal and India. Bhediari is a well-known place in Nepal, and it is home to King Virat's capital and the Damadidhi Kitchak palace (Mishra, 2013).

Similarly, historical sites such as Rani and Bathnaha are Nepalese sites. However, Thakurganj, Madhubani, is a historic location in India related to the Matsya Desh. The region that became known as Mithila was an ancient Matsya Desh. Likewise, ancient sites such as Rani, Bathnaha, and others are Nepalese. Thakurganj, Madhubani, is an old Indian place associated with the Matsya Desh (Mishra, 2013). Mithila was the name given to an ancient Matsya Desh area.

Before Christ, the southern region of Bihar was known as the Kingdom of Magadha. This kingdom was one of the sixteen kingdoms of India (Nahar, 1956). Furthermore, the Kashi region may impact North Bihar and Nepal. Therefore, due to the influence of the Magadha monarchy, the name Madesh can be considered appropriate.

The name Madhesh, as previously said, refers to Lord Shiva/Mahesh. The countries mentioned above' words appear to be affected by geographical and political considerations, as well as cultural beliefs. Because Madhesh relates to Lord Shiva, the name seems synonymous in Hindu-majority countries. In public, Madesh and Madhesh are interchangeable.

Madhya Pradesh

The Nepal Academy's dictionary definition of Madhesh and its interpretation of Madhesh as Madhya Pradesh are useless. Madhesh is located in the south of Nepal, rather than the Centre. On the other hand, Madhya Pradesh is located in the Centre of India's map. As a result, Madhya Pradesh has become a state name in India. It is surprising and disappointing that the Nepali dictionary, published by Nepal's official body, does not convey Madhesh properly in words.

Madhya Pradesh is situated in central India, just south of the Vindhya mountain range. Madhya Pradesh was called and founded in Indian political history following the country's independence in 1956. Under the Indian States Reorganization Act of 1956, Madhya Pradesh was formed by uniting Central India, Vindhya Pradesh, and Bhopal (MPPSC, 2021).

Madhya Pradesh carried the Central India stamp throughout its territory before coinage. As a result, Madhya Pradesh is easily identified as an intermediate state. On the other hand, Nepal's Madhesh is incorrectly labelled as Madhya Pradesh in the Nepal Academy lexicon. The region has never been seen in Nepal's history and no longer exists in the Centre of the country's political map. Nepal Academy appears to have followed the Sanskrit approach in defining Nepal's Madhesh.

Nepal Academy's definition of Madhesh has added fuel to the fire in Nepal's Madhesh movement. The Nepal Academy definition raised the problem among readers, even though it was not their intention. But, on the other hand, scholars bear responsibility for making it an issue for the political environment and also giving a proper solution.

Ancient Matsya Desh

Based on Sanskrit scriptures, Som Prasad Khatiwada has written on Nepal's Central and Eastern Terai Madhes. After the death of King Janak (Shiradhvaj), the old kingdom of Mithila was divided into the realms of Banga (Bang) and Matsya. As a result, Matsyadesh, an independent state, was formed in the eastern region of Koshi (Khatiwada, 2013).

In ancient Sanskrit literature, the Himalayas and Vindhyachal are never referred to as Madhesh. According to Khatiwada, the Koshi region has been known as Kirat Pradesh since ancient times. The eastern portion was known as Limbuwan, while the western region was known as Khambuwan. The river Koshi is known as Kaushiki-Ganga in Sanskrit. Koshi, Baraha, Kokoha, and Chatara have been well-known since ancient times.

The Saptakoshi region has been mentioned in Sanskrit literature. However, no intermediate state named Madhesh has been discovered. According to Himalayan tradition, the Saptakoshi originated from Parvati's sweat, according to Kirat folklore (Rai, 2005). As a result, this region is linked to Mahadev Shiva or the Kirat dynasty. Furthermore, Kurushila is where the Saptakoshi meets the Ganges, according to Chinese traveller Wen-Sang (Khatiwada, 2013). As a result, the Matsya-related word Kuru's influence appears to have spread to the Ganges in Matsya Desh.

King Virat (Viratha), the ruler of Matsya Desh, belonged to the Kirat-Asura dynasty, claims historian Iman Singh Chemjong. In his work, Chemjong refers to the lowlands of Nepal, including Northern Bihar, as a Matsya Desh (Chemjong, 2003a). In the book, he refers to the Mahabharata-era King Virat of Matsyadesh. The same Virat ruler provided asylum to the five Pandavas in exile. The Mahabharat mentions Virat, the Matsya king. Historians claim that the Koshi region was Matsya Desh throughout the Ramayana and Mahabharata eras.

The five Pandavas' search for safety in the Matsya Desh is detailed in the Mahabharata. The area of Matsya Desh was capable, lovely, peaceful, civilised, and safe. The Mahabharat epic worshipped Lord Shiva from a cultural and theological perspective. Based on this, it is known that five Pandavas offered Shiva worship. Shiva is the god of Matsya Raj Virat. Thus, the Pandavas' natural tendency was to seek refuge with him as a result.

Madhesh is a Shaivite homonym for Mahesh

Shaivism has a long history in various forms. It predominated in Mesopotamia before Kirat, Dravidian, or Bhil entered the Sindh-Harappan civilisation. Historian Narada Muni Thulung has shown the connection between the Matsya (fish) lineage and Mesopotamian Babylonia based on the ancient history (Genesis) recounted in the Bible. He asserts that Shaivism was practised in Mesopotamia and Babylon before the Matsya monarchy. They established the Indus Valley Civilization as a result before the arrival of the Aryans (Thulung, 1985).

One of the groups landed in Northern Bihar, according to Kirat history. In Nepal's Koshi Terai, they began to grow in population. It is also supported by linguistics (Pokhrel, 1998). They established the Matsya Desh after crossing across from the west. They practised the Shaivite religion, and there is historical evidence of this. Only after the Vedic period did the Aryans incorporate Shaivism into the Sanatan (Hindu) faith (Danielou & Gabin, 2003).

The titles Madesh and Madhesh were interchangeable due to Matsyaraj's Shaiva influence. Madhesh is connected to Madesh via the Shiva-influenced Matsya/Mlhechha and Magadh kingdoms. The Madhesh region has been extensively mischaracterized in the Nepal Academy's dictionary as the plains of Indian Madhya Pradesh and Himalayan South Nepal, which are located within the designated landmarks between Himalayas, Vindhyachal, Kuru, and Prayag.

Kirat-Asura

Historians think Nepal's Kirat period began in the eighth century BC (Chemjong, 2003a). However, some experts believe it was much earlier, while others believe it was much later. However, Kirat Limbus formed the ten Limbuwan states in the sixth century, according to Kirat's history of Eastern Nepal. They defeated eight Rais who ruled the Kirat kingdom. The Kirat Limbu monarchy was then formed (Chemjong, 2003).

Maranghang/Mang Mawarang defeated all Limbuwans and assassinated the sovereign power in the 7th century with the help of Tibet. He called his kingdom Khambuwan in the west, Limbuwan in the middle, Lapchan in the east, and Kirat Morong in the south, all the way to Purnia in India (Chemjong, 2003).

Before Maranghang's capture of Kirat Limbu's Ten Limbuwan states, 700 of his Rangeli friends fled to Tibet in search of shelter. Before going to Tibet, he ruled the modern Rangeli (his Rangoli) in the capital and Morong (now Morang) province. However, under the guise of leading the region, the ten Limbuwans forced him away. In exchange, he attacked and expanded his territory by invading 10 Limbuwans with the help of Tibet's Srangchong Gampo (Chemjong, 2003). The Indian territory Bihar was under Tibetan rule in the 7th century, according to Indian historian Rahul

Sankrityayan (Sankritiyan, 1951). In any case, Nepal's Terai region, including northern Bihar, had long been a Kirat stronghold.

Madhesh indigenous peoples

Tharu, Dhimal, Satar, Koche, and Meche are indigenous ethnic groups belonging to the Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, and the Tibeto-Burman language families who do not identify as Madhesi. However, they claimed that those who later migrated to the country from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and India have become Madhesi and claimed Madhesh in Nepal politics. However, indigenous peoples accuse them of infringing on their territory.

Between 2063 and 2064 VS, Nepal experienced the Madhesh movement (2007-8). As a result, Nepal's political structure has undergone significant change. The country was reorganised as a federal republic. The administration, on the other hand, became unstable and chaotic. As a result of the country's insecurity, India slapped an embargo on Nepal in 2015. India utilised the blockade to pressure Nepal to resolve the Madhesh political issue. During the debate, the Government of India pushed for the rights and interests of the 10 million Indians who now call Nepal home. Indian Minister Rajnath Singh put pressure on Nepal in a statement (Shrivastava, 2015).

The Koshi region in Nepal's east comprises ethnicities such as Dhimal, Meche, Koche, Satar, and Urau. Tharu, Danuwar, and Ahir live in the western Madhesh area of Nepal (Biata, 1972). A Nepali history of Meche, Koch kingdom in the east, and Tharu state in the west of Terai follow the ancient Mithila, Matsya, and Banga kingdoms.

The Tharu-dominated Terai region was held by the Indian British before being returned to Nepal in part (Regmi, 1969). Gradually, people relocated to Terai from India and Nepal's hilly and mountainous areas once the government controlled malaria in the region.

Coinage with a local flavour

Like a person's name, a place's name is derived from a local dialect, event, or attribute. When researching the origins of a place's name such as Madhesh, one may sense the local ethnicity, site peculiarities, original language, and culture. The Nepal Academy's dictionary definition does not appropriately measure antiquity, indigenous people's fragrance, or location. This definition perplexes the reader.

Based on Virat Raja artefacts discovered during excavations from the Mahabharata era, Gograha/Nepalgunj got a new name Biratnagar. In the same way, Maranghang/Mawarang gained the reputation of Morang in the seventh century. Meche and Mechi are derived from *Mlhechch*, which is a Sanskrit word. Koshi, which means "river" in the Tibeto-Burmese language where it first appeared, is derived from Tibet (Pande, 1986). Unlike nearby localities, the name "Madhesh" does not have a base in the Academy dictionary. The definition of Madhesh in the Nepali dictionary (including Sanskrit) was *Madhya* (middle) and *Pradesh* (state) obtained solely from the linguistic point of view. This linguistic perspective is irrelevant in this case because the definition of Madhesh does not indicate the Terai region of Nepal.

The Nepal Academy's lexicon defines *Madhya* and *Pradesh* as the Madhesh region based on the Sanskrit term construction that does not apply in this case. According to Sanskrit and Nepali dictionaries, Madhesh is *Madhya Pradesh*, which is not true in Nepal. Dictionary's Madhesh or *Madhya Pradesh* definition in this regard is meaningless within the broad limit of the Himalayas and the Bindhyachal mountains, between Kuru and Prayag.

The *Matsya Desh* phrase, on the other hand, predates Sanskrit. In other words, Sanskrit language and literature do not pertain to Madhesh coinage, and the word belonged to the pre-Aryan *Matsya/Mlhechha Desh*, *Magadh Desh* (Thulung, 1985).

Boundaries defined by the dictionary are not justified by the evidence

Sanskrit and Nepali dictionaries arbitrarily created Madhesh from *Madhya* and *Pradesh* for the sake of linguistic exercise. Looking at Indian and Nepali history also does not support the claim. Between the Vindhyaachal and Himalayan mountain ranges, there have historically been numerous kingdoms or republics that have gone by a variety of titles.

From the time of the Vedic civilization till British rule, India had about 565 states. Between the Vindhyaachal Mountains and the Himalayan Mountains during the Mahabharata era, *Matsya Desh* of King Virat, *Koshibarah*, and *Chatara* was significant. Kirat and Buddhist ages mentioned Kathmandu (Nepal), *Shakrajya*, *Vatsa*, *Kosal*, *Malla*, *Bhriji*, *Panchal*, *Kuru*, *Gandhar*, and other locations (Nahar, 1956; Chemjong, 2003). But neither Madhesh nor *Madhya Pradesh* was mentioned in Indian and Nepali history.

CONCLUSION

The Madhesh term in the Nepal Academy lexicon needs to be updated because it is not grounded in reality. The reader requires a new understanding of the Madhesh term.

Madhesh and Madesh are named on various factors. The Koshi region in northern Bihar was formerly a Matsya Desh. This territory was Kirat-Asura land, also known as the Mlhechha area according to Sanskrit literature. Historical evidence indicates that Mlhechha was the ancestor of Meche and Mechi. Based on the same premise, it is reasonable to suppose that Mlhechha Desh, Mechdesh, and Madesh are conversant in the local tongue. However, we cannot ignore the effect of Magadha Desh in this context.

In addition to these, the Madhesh region has a long tradition of Shiva worship. The name Madhesh is connected to the Mahesh phrase. In naming slang, Madhesh is translated as Mahesh or Shiva. Shiva is also known as Kirateswar Mahadev. The Kirat territory was owned by Matsya Desh and was the same lineage from the ancient until the middle Ages. As a result, the phrase Matsyadesh had a long-lasting impact.

Evidence indicates Shaivites in Matsya and Magadh Desh are referred to as "Madhesh." As a result, Madhesh and Madesh are homonyms for Matsyadesh, Magadhesh, and Shiv (Mahesh) rather than Madhya Pradesh.

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