



Rhombus Poetry: Crafting Geometric Verses in Nepali Literary Expression

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Abstract

Rhombus poetry, a recent addition to the vast expanse of Nepali literary expression, represents a significant shift in both form and content. This research article explores the evolution of this unique geometric genre, which was pioneered by Milan Bohora in 2020 in Assam, India. The rhombus structure, with its rigid form of 19 lines and 100 letters, presents an innovative challenge to poets while maintaining strict adherence to grammatical and linguistic rules. This study examines the historical development of poetry, tracing the evolution of Nepali literature, particularly in Assam, and explores emerging poetic trends within the region. The emergence of rhombus poetry as a new genre is discussed, including its formal adoption in the first Rhombus Poem Conference held in Jagun, Tinsukia, Assam, in 2022. This conference, attended by poets from across India and neighboring countries, set the foundation for rhombus poetry's form and content. Additionally, the article reflects on the genre's thematic focus, the contributions of various poets, and its growing recognition in Nepali literary circles. Rhombus poetry offers a fresh approach to poetic expression, blending form and content in ways that challenge conventional norms. This study highlights its future prospects, potential for international influence, and challenges faced by this innovative genre.

Keywords: Rhombus poetry, Nepali literature, geometric poetry, Milan Bohora, poetic innovation

Introduction: A Brief History of Poetry

Poetry, as one of the oldest forms of artistic expression, has been evolving since ancient times. The earliest records of poetry can be traced to civilizations like Mesopotamia and Egypt, where oral traditions formed the bedrock of literary cultures. In the Indian subcontinent, classical Sanskrit poets such as Maharshi Valmiki and Kalidas were pioneers in shaping literary traditions. Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Kalidas' *Shakuntala* set the stage for epic and classical poetry. The richness of poetic expression continued to evolve globally, with Western poets like T.S. Eliot, P.B. Shelley, and others, further shaping modern poetry. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Shelley's romantic verses revolutionized the emotional depth of poetic genres. Similarly, Mirza Ghalib

and Omar Khayyam contributed to South Asian and Persian poetic traditions, introducing deeply reflective, philosophical, and metaphysical layers to the art form.

As literary trends moved forward, poetry continued to develop and shift through new genres and structures. Nepali literature has also witnessed transformations through time, with distinct genres shaping its journey over two hundred fifty years. Nepali poetry, especially in India and Assam, has seen significant growth, with innovative forms emerging to capture contemporary sentiments.

Methodology

This research article is based on qualitative methods, including primary and secondary sources such as literary reviews, rhombus poetry collections, interviews with poets, and conference proceedings. An analysis of the form, structure, and content of rhombus poems was conducted through textual examination and comparative studies. The rhombus poem conference proceedings held in Jagun, Assam, provided critical insights into the development of this genre.

Literature Review: The Growth of Nepali Literature in Assam and India

The growth of Nepali literature in Assam and other parts of India reflects a continuous effort by the Nepali-speaking Gorkha community to preserve and evolve their literary heritage. Early contributions were seen through translations and adaptations of classical texts like *the Ramayana* by Bhanu Bhakta Acharya who is considered as the Adi Kavi¹ of Nepali literature. His efforts marked the beginning of a literary journey that would later see the emergence of modernist poets such as Hari Bhakta Katuwal, Agam Singh Giri, Tulsiram Sharma Kashyap, Gadul Singh Lama popularly known as Sanu Lama, Parasmani Pradhan, Rajendra Bhandari, Bairagi Kainla, Indra Bahadur Rai, Bikram Bir Thapa, Tulachan Ale, Bhupi Sherchan, Bindya Subba, Kamala Rai, Pavitra Lama, Chhabilal Upadhyaya, Bidyapati Dahal, Rudra Baral, Baidyanath Upadhyaya, Naina Adhikari etc. introduced new thematic trends in Nepali poetry in India.

In Assam, the Nepali speaking Gorkha community contributed significantly to the growth of literary expression. With a rich history of cross-cultural exchange, Gorkha poets in Assam began experimenting with form and content, leading to the development of varied genres of verse writing originated from various parts of the world like Mukataka², Haiku³, Sijo⁴, Senryu⁵, and others. The formation of literary organizations like Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Assam by the Gorkha community which was later converted to Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha greatly contributed in the promotion and in flourishing of Nepali literature. It is an established notion that literature is a dynamic entity, never remains stagnant, and Nepali poetry too has evolved through various transformations, embracing emerging trends and new genres.

¹ First poet or original poet

² A detached stanza, the meaning of which is complete in itself

³ A haiku is a short, unrhymed poem of Japanese origin that typically consists of three lines with a syllable pattern of five, seven, and five and is about nature foibles.

⁴ Sijo poetry is a traditional Korean poetic form consisting of three lines, typically with a total of 44-46 syllables. Each line usually introduces a theme, develops it, and concludes with a twist or surprise

⁵ Senryū is a Japanese form of short poetry similar to haiku in construction: three lines with 17 morae. Senryū tend to be about human foibles

New Trends in Nepali Literature and Emerging Poetic Forms in Assam

In recent years, there has been an emergence of innovative poetic forms in Nepali literature, particularly in Assam. The development of Rhombus poetry exemplifies this creative transformation. Over the last 250 years, Nepali poetry has evolved to include various genres and sub-genres originated, developed and submerged in various parts of India which succinctly incorporates poetic genre such as Lok Gatha or Ballad⁶, Muktak, Haiku, Limerick⁷, Villanelle⁸, Sonnet⁹, Sijo, Tanka¹⁰, Senryu, Sedoka¹¹, Rubaii¹², Bachhita¹³, Suseli¹⁴, Than Bauk¹⁵, Pyramid¹⁶, etc. Each of these forms contributes to a broader understanding of poetic expression and thematic diversity in Nepali literature.

The Emergence of Rhombus Poetry: Pioneering Innovation

The word rhombus comes from the Greek *rhombos*, meaning “a spinning top” or “a piece of wood whirled on a string.” It is a four-sided, or quadrilateral, geometric figure in which all four sides are of the same length and each of the two pairs of opposite sides are parallel to each other. A rhombus is an equilateral parallelogram.

Milan Bohora, a renowned and innovative poet from the Biswanath district of Assam contemplated over the new structural poem based on geometrical shape of rhombus and penned the first rhombus poem which can be termed as the first of its kind in the history of poetical creations in any language. Rhombus poetry emerged as a groundbreaking genre in 2020 and gained momentum with every new follower of the genre. Bohora’s work pushed the boundaries of traditional poetic forms by incorporating a geometrically rigid yet aesthetically fluid structure, resembling a rhombus. Milan Bohora coined the genre as *Rhombus Poetry* by its shape and was pragmatically endorsed by Sahitya Akademi Awardee author from Tezpur, Assam Sri Gyan Bahadur Chetry, who recognized the potential of rhombus poetry as a literary trend.

⁶ A ballad is a narrative poem called as Lok Gatha that tells a story or incidents. Each stanza usually comprises of four lines with 1st and 3rd lines having eight syllables each, while the 2nd and 4th lines having six syllables.

⁷ It is said to have originated in Ireland and are made up of 5 lines and follow a strict rhyme scheme. The first, second and the fifth lines consist of seven to ten syllables and is essential that they rhyme, while the third and the fourth line have five to seven syllables and rhyme with each other.

⁸ This French poetic form is made up of 5 sets of three lines which consists of 19 lines with five tercets followed by a quatrain (a set of 4 lines). The rhyme scheme is ABA for the tercets and ABAA for the quatrain.

⁹ This poetic form originated in Italy which consisted of 14 lines and a standardized rhyme scheme.

¹⁰ A Tanka poem is a form of classical Japanese poetry consisting of 31 syllables, typically arranged in five lines with a 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern

¹¹ A Sedoka is a form of Japanese poem that is unrhymed and consists of two three-line katauta which follow a 5/7/7 syllables count,

¹² Rubaii is the genre of Urdu Nazm poetry which comprises 4 lines with the first, second and fourth lines having the same rhyming words. 24 metres are prescribed for writing Rubaii

¹³ A form of poetry invented by Amar Tyagi

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¹⁵ A Burmese poetic format which consists of an epigrammatic tercet of four syllable lines where the rhyme shifts backward through the syllables from the fourth in the first line to the second in the third.

¹⁶ A pyramid poem is a sound poem of four lines where the first line has one word, the second line two words, and so on. Each word in the poem must begin with the same sound.

Rhombus Poetry: Structure and Thematic Focus

The most distinctive feature of Rhombus poetry is its geometric shape. The poem consists of 19 lines, with exactly 100 letters, forming a symmetrical rhombus. The lines follow a pattern of ascending and descending letter counts, creating a visual appeal. Poets are required to adhere to grammatical rules strictly, ensuring that joint letters and virama symbols are used correctly without violating the overall word count. The first and last lines of the poem contain a single letter, symbolizing the compact nature of thought and expression within the confines of the rhombus.

The first Rhombus Poem Conference, held on 23rd and 24th April, 2022 in Jagun, Tinsukia, Assam, was a defining moment for this genre. Poets from Assam, North East India, Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Nepal gathered to discuss and refine the structure and rules of rhombus poetry. The conference, organized by the Nepali Sahitya Bikash Samiti, unanimously established certain criteria for a poem to be included in the genre of rhombus poem. Dambar Dahal, the former President of Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha essentially figures out the requisite criteria of the rhombus poetry in his introductory note to the collection of rhombus poems by Indian and other guest poets *Barpipal: Rhombus Kavita* pointing the following distinctive features:

- a) The poem must be rhombus-shaped.
- b) The title must consist of a single word.
- c) The poem must contain 19 lines and 100 letters.
- d) Each line must be independent and complete in itself.
- e) The letter count ascends from one to ten and then descends back to one.
- f) Joint letters and virama¹⁷ symbols are not counted in the letter total.
- g) The thematic focus must be unified, exploring deep human emotions or abstract concepts.

Rhombus Poetry as a Genre and Its Future Prospects

The genre which started its literary journey from a small place of Assam through the social media platform has continuously flourished and is found to be attracting poets of varied languages and different parts of the world. Since its inception, rhombus poetry has gained recognition among poets across India and beyond. Notable poets such as Devicharan Sedai, Prakash Kuikel, Arjun Upreti, Jagannath Upadhyaya, and others have embraced this new form. The genre has also crossed linguistic boundaries, with poets like Ajit Kumar Hazarika in Assamese, Radhika Upadhyaya of Behali, Assam tried her hand in Bengali, and Chitra Poudel of Biswanath, Assam experimented the form in Hindi while Dibakar Neupane from Amtoka, Kokrajhar, Assam tried rhombus poem in Sanskrit contributing to its expansion. This new poetic genre has wide acclamation with regular addition to the number of its creators and their literary publication. It came in collected form as an anthology with the publication of *Tanabana* written and published by its initiator Milan Bohora and its release on 13th February, 2021 in the Central Conference of Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha held in Golia, Biswanath Charali, Assam. Thereafter, this genre of poetry has attracted immediate supporters and followers with young

¹⁷ A mark added to a consonant sign in Devanagari and related alphabets to indicate that the consonant sign stands only for a consonant and not for a combination of consonant plus following vowel

enthusiasts as well as reputed poets of India and abroad adding to the richness of this innovative genre of poetry. The treasury of rhombus poetry is essentially enhanced with publication of Seshmani Acharya's *Daali: Rhombus Kabita Sangraha*; Geetasri Sharma edited *Kavyanjali: Rhombus Kavita Nari Hastakshyar* and her individual collection of rhombus poems *Tilasmi*; Giridhari Upadhyaya's *Shaligram: Rhombus Kabita Sangraha*; Arjun Upreti Apritam's *Sayapatri: Collection of Rhombus Poems*; Dr. Jagannath Upadhyaya's *Kalanaad*; Shiva K. Shrestha's *Niyatra*; Gyan Bahadur Khatri's *Anubhuti*; L.P Parajuli's *Kavya Sudha*, Milan Bohora and Devicharan Sedai edited *Barpipal: Rhombus Kavita etc.* Apart from these anthologies published by individual poets, a number of poets from different parts of Assam, India and neighboring nations and abroad are found to be profoundly impressed by this unique genre and a number of female rhombus poets like Dulumoni Upadhyaya, Padma Devi Dhungana, Renuka Devi Sapkota, Indira Gautam, Indira Khadka, Manisha Dahal are also found to have emerged in this distinctive genre through various social media platforms and other literary platforms. The genre is also found to have got great acclamation from renowned poets Dambar Dahal, Gyan Bahadur Chetry, Mohan Subedi, Chandra Bhattarai, Geetasri Sharma, Khadananda Dulal, Puroshottam Dahal, Rewati Raman Sapkota, Mohan Kumar Raut, Dipak Dawadi, Bhim Dhamala etc. The future of rhombus poetry as a genre looks promising, given its unique structure and the thematic flexibility it offers. However, there are challenges to be addressed, particularly the rigid form, which might limit the creativity of poets. Nonetheless, with continuous exploration and improvisation, rhombus poetry has the potential to establish itself as a significant genre in modern Nepali literature.

Conclusion

Rhombus poetry, a geometric form of verse, represents an innovative shift in Nepali literature. Milan Bohora's pioneering efforts, supported by prominent poets and literary figures, have given rise to a unique poetic structure that balances form and content. As this genre gains momentum across India and beyond, it promises to inspire future poets to explore new dimensions of expression within its rigid framework.

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