

Free Verse Poetry Trend in Nepal: A Critical Review of Form, Voice, Identity, and Contemporary Transformation

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Type of Research: Review Article

Received: May 10, 2026

Revised & Accepted: July 11, 2026

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Abstract

Background: Free verse has developed into a vital mode of modern and contemporary poetic expression in Nepal, although criticism has focused much more on individual poets, poems, themes, stylistic devices, and events than on the development of free verse as a literary trend.

Methods: This paper reviews the literature comprising the research articles bearing DOI and published from 2021 to 2025, paying particular attention to Nepali poetry, prose poetry, modernity, rhythm, identity, resistance, culture, and digital circulation of literature. Articles were searched using scholarly journal database and DOI and then were selected on the basis of their connection to the development and peculiarities of contemporary Nepali poetry.

Results: Literature shows that the free verse in Nepal cannot simply be defined as a lack of metrical organisation but can be seen as an adaptive poetic mode, where lineation, cadence, repetition, punctuation, imagery, syntactic variation, silences, and semantic accents produce rhythm. The literature also demonstrates the transition from formal modernist experiments to socially situated, diverse, feminist, indigenous, ecological, existential, and digitised poetic expressions. Prose poetry, like free verse, represents a kind of resistance to metrical poetic tradition, but these two poetic modes should not be confused with each other.

Conclusion: Free verse has proved to be resilient because it incorporates diverse Nepali experiences, and at the same time allows experimenting with form.

Novelty: This review combines the scattered literature that contains DOIs and provides a historically sensitive framework connecting formal flexibility with social diversity, identity politics, technological mediation, and novel literary trends in Nepal.

Keywords: identity; modernity; rhythm; resistance; stylistics

Introduction

Nepali poetry has witnessed significant changes in terms of form and theme due to the process of modern literature development. One of the key changes has been the weakening of the poets' dependence on fixed metre, regular rhyme and traditional stanzas and increasing preference to flexible lineation and syntax. In the context of contemporary criticism, this process is usually described using such terms as free verse, prose poetry, gadyakavita, muktalaya, or modern experimental poetry. They are somewhat similar but not interchangeable. Therefore, discussing free verse in Nepal requires paying attention to both the poetic form and the historical, cultural and political circumstances of choosing flexible forms.

Free verse represents a type of poetic organisation in which rhythm is not necessarily regulated by metrical scheme. Recent literature on free verse focuses on the idea that the lack of metrical regularity does not exclude rhythm creation. Instead, rhythm can be formed by speech patterns, repetition, line breaks, parallel syntactic structure, sound, silences, semantic groupings, and the interplay of visual and auditory elements of the poem. According to Crone (2023), free verse and prose poetry can produce context-specific complex rhythmic systems even in the absence of metrical scheme. This approach is particularly helpful in analyzing Nepali poetry because many modern and contemporary poems gain their rhythm thanks to flexible cadence.

Scholarship of modern Nepali poetry suggests that modernization entailed changes in taste, topic, and consciousness in poetry. As noted by Shahi (2021), the works of Devkota reflected modernism through the experimentation in poetic practice that questioned the stability of existing literary culture and provided room for inclusion and diversity. Likewise, Timalisina (2024), having conducted a review of existing scholarship on Devkota, links the modernity of Nepal to developing social consciousness in the mid-twentieth century. These reviews are valuable for a review of free verse since changes in formal aspects of poetry cannot be isolated from changes in the social imagination.

The present review fills an important gap. Most DOI-bearing studies found for this review focus on some particular poet, poem, poetry collection, stylistic element, theme, or literary movement. Some studies focus on contemporary prose poetry and individual poems, yet there are few reviews that explore the common trends among all these studies and discuss the evolution of free verse in Nepal over a longer period of time. The issue is not the lack of scholarly research on contemporary Nepali poetry but the scattering of research in various categories of formal, thematic, ideological, and stylistic research. This synthesis may help in evaluating if free verse in Nepal is a temporary modernist experiment or a stable poetic form.

Research Objective

The Major Objective of the Present Review The principal goal of this review is the synthesis of DOI-bearing scholarship on modern and contemporary Nepali poetry for identifying the main trends and features of free verse in Nepal.

In particular, the present review will help to:

- i. trace the historical and formal movement toward flexible poetic structures;
- ii. evaluate the functioning of rhythm, line breaks, syntax, punctuation, imagery, and stylistic deviations in flexible forms of poetry;

- iii. Identify important changes in themes related to free verse, which include modernity, social realities, gender issues, war, indigenous identity, culture, ecology, and existential concerns;
- iv. Distinguish free verse from another closely connected genre called prose poetry;
- v. Study the relationship between formlessness and evolving social identities; and
- vi. Outline research questions and identify possible research areas related to the study of free verse in Nepali.

Review of Literature

Conceptualizing Free Verse

Free verse is commonly mistaken for poetry without a particular form. This notion is too simplistic. What is actually meant by the concept of free verse is the movement of formal elements from metrical structures to new ones. According to Crone (2023), the rhythm continues to be an essential element of free verse, even in the absence of metrical schemes. It can be created through the use of recurring syntax, stressed and unstressed sounds, semantic emphasis, pausing, and line structure. It is a particularly important finding for Nepali poetry since a work cannot be classified as free verse simply because it lacks the metrical scheme.

Similarly, the distinction between free verse and prose poetry is also equally essential. Prose poetry usually employs the sentence or the paragraph as the basic visual unit instead of the line. The study on prose poetry by Hetherington and Atherton argues that while prose poetry creates its own unique rhythmic devices through the motion of the sentence, internal rhyme, repetition, and cadence, free verse continues to retain lineation as an important formal device. Therefore, Nepali gadyakavita may have the same anti-metrical spirit of free verse but it should not necessarily be considered free verse.

Within the Nepali critical context, some recent scholarship suggests that gadyakavita is a well-established subject of study. Baral (2021a) studies contemporary Nepali prose poetry from the notion of vakrokti and discovers meaningful application of stylistic deviation in poems written from 2070s B.S. onwards. Similarly, Baral (2021b) analyses rasa in selected contemporary Nepali prose poems and finds that traditional aesthetic notions persist even in modern prose-poetic form. These studies suggest that formal modernity does not imply renunciation of traditional aesthetic notions. It is quite clear that the contemporary poetry involves formal innovation together with the traditional literary notions.

Historical Movement toward Formal Freedom

The move towards flexible poetic form should be considered as part of the broader modernization process of Nepali poetry. The modern period witnessed a new set of themes, a new conception of the poet and an altered relationship between literary language and social reality. As Shahi (2021) considers, Devkota was a crucial modernizer and his poetry broke away from the inherited stability and developed an inclusive poetic language. According to Paudyal and Baral (2021) in their study of Nepali war poetry, the thematic progress of poetry evolved as the poets moved from the representation of martial valour of poets to a critical representation of war, identity and peace. Therefore, changes in the theme compelled the poets to innovate new forms to capture ambiguous, conflicted, complex and ordinary experiences.

It is not to say that one traditional poetic form suddenly vanished and free verse immediately replaced it. On the contrary, poetry developed multiple poetic practices. Traditional metres, lyrical poems, songs, innovative poems, prose poems and free verse could coexist. The modern period thus created a field of multiple forms. Free verse was attractive as it offered poets freedom in representing fragmented experiences and conversational thoughts.

Finally, Timalisina (2024) demonstrates that Devkota's poetry should be interpreted through the process of development of Nepali modernity and social consciousness. The importance of the argument in the context of free verse is indirect but important. Formal innovation was often associated with the changing notion of individuality, society and nation.

Rhythm, Lineation, and the New Poetic Music

Among the most significant results of the latest research is that even formal freedom cannot destroy poetic rhythm. For example, Gurung (2022) analyses the structure of rhythm based on lineation, parallelism, deviation, contrast, segmentation, address, and punctuation in Sarita Tiwari's long prose poem "Ke timile malai aviskar garyau?". The research is especially helpful since it proves that a poem can organize rhythm using relationships rather than metrical pattern. The point made above could be expanded into general properties of free verse. First, line breaks can introduce hesitation, acceleration, emphasis, interruption, or silence. Second, punctuation can change breathing rhythm and interpretation speed. Third, repetition can replace rhymes as the means of cohesion. Fourth, parallel constructions can build expectations, whereas syntactic deviation can break them. Thus, the free verse poem is not an anarchic text; it is just a differently structured rhythmic system.

In this case, Crone's (2023) research proves the validity of the theoretical perspective suggested above by demonstrating that informationally dense rhythmic systems different from ordinary prose can be created in free verse. In addition, recent research about Spanish free verse emphasizes the significance of rhythm after the isosyllabic construction abandonment (Díaz, 2025). Although the linguistic and literary contexts differ, the comparative approach is helpful here: the crucial point is whether the poem has a rhythm and not a metrical pattern.

Finally, Nepali prose-poetry research makes the same point from the different angle. Thus, Baral (2021a) finds stylistic deviation and sound patterns meaningful in the contemporary prose poetry. Moreover, Baral (2022) discovers that Indian Nepali prose poems use vakrokti forms that make them expressively distinctive. These findings prove that flexible poetic forms are highly organized in terms of language.

Free Verse and Modernist Experimentation

Modernist poetry is characterized by wide rejection of existing literary conventions, but Nepali modernism should not be regarded as their mere reproduction. Shahi (2021) suggests that Devkota's poetic modernity presupposed both rejection and reconstruction – his challenge to traditional forms was accompanied by establishing a new modern literary tradition. Thus, free verse in Nepal cannot be interpreted only in terms of the imported definition.

The modernist movement also created some new relationships between the poetic voice and reality. Social suffering, poverty, alienation, politics, urban life, and psychology called for forms which would account for discontinuity. As Paudyal and Baral (2021) demonstrate, the depiction of war in Nepali poetry turned from heroism to disillusionment and peace-oriented reflections. Naturally, such a thematic shift would require more flexible forms as the language

of criticism is often characterized by interruption, irony, juxtaposition, and conversational quality.

Another good example would be a long poem by Mohan Koirala called "Nadi Kinar Ka Majhi". As demonstrated by Sharma and Baral (2021) using the concept of *padapurvardha vakrata*, the author deliberately creates stylistic complexity. The study supports the hypothesis that experimental Nepali poetry is built on linguistic techniques even when it diverges from conventional metre.

Free Verse and Social Reality

There is also the contemporary tendency of the close connection between flexible form of poetry and social reality. According to Aryal (2023), contemporary Nepali literature becomes more and more focused on accessible speech, freedom, democratic values, and socially meaningful themes. Though the research is wider than the problem of free verse, its conclusions will help to understand the nature of formal freedom.

As Paudel (2025) notes in his analysis of the collection of poems *Pyaala-sanga Naya Kabita* by Suman Ghimire "Agrim", poverty, deprivation, pain, irony, progressiveness, existentialism, and social reality are the key themes in the collection. This work is viewed as the reflection of society, politics, economy, traditions, culture, and national issues. Such thematic range would be easy to accommodate in free verse as it allows the poet to jump rapidly from story telling, reflection, description, dialogue, satire, and philosophical considerations.

Thus, one can speak about the democratization of poetic diction. Using the technique of free verse, poets find it easier to include in their work the elements of everyday speech, local dialects, political terms, confessions, and culturally-specific expressions which cannot easily fit into a conventional metric form. It does not mean that it is going to be simpler poetry. On the contrary, it may become even more syntactically and semantically complicated.

Gender, Voice, and the Politics of Expression

The gendered experience is now an essential feature in modern Nepali poetry. For example, in her study of Sarita Tiwari's prose poem, Gurung (2022) places female existence at the core of her analysis and shows how questions, segmentation, parallelism, and punctuation create rhythm. Hence, the formal structure is used to convey gendered voice of the poem.

In their research on five poems from Pasinako Ghar, Lamichhane and Neupane (2024) identify issues related to social problems, women's struggles, social expectations, material dissatisfaction, and spiritual love. As the research shows, modern poetic expression may merge personal emotions with the critical attitude toward women's social situation. Free verse is especially good for such poetry since it resembles both speech and thoughts and allows creating poetic tension simultaneously.

Nevertheless, the link between form and gender should be approached with caution. In fact, free verse itself does not guarantee any emancipation of poetry; its benefit consists in the formal resources it provides. A poet may use them in different ways, challenging dominant discourses, reproducing them, or complicating. The literary meaning depends on the interplay of form, voice, and ideology.

War, Trauma, and Resistance

War and political conflicts are another sphere where modern Nepali poetry moves away from heroic depiction of events. For example, according to Paudyal and Baral (2021), the

development of such poetry has led to the emergence of a new attitude that differs from martial glorification and includes disillusionment and anti-war views. Baral et al. (2023) consider the psychology of fighters in Sirjan Aviral's "Cantonment" poems and find tragic psychological aspects in them.

The importance of free verse in this case is related to the possibility of depicting of the unstable psychological state. As a rule, a traumatic experience cannot be represented by a consistent story. In fact, fragmentation of memories, abrupt images, conflicting emotions, and uncompleted sentences better correspond to the nature of trauma. This does not mean that all war poems created in free verse have to be trauma poems.

The politics of resistance has been becoming more noticeable in studies devoted to poetry as well. Magarati and Bist (2025) examine fourteen poems from Apha: Unmukta Pusta and show how this anthology illustrates caste discrimination, social exclusion, and Dalit resistance. Thus, it is possible to see how contemporary poetry can serve as counter-discourse. Flexible poetic structures are able to fulfill such a counter-discursive purpose, providing direct address, irony, testimony, narrative fragments, and culturally specific language.

Indigenous Identity and Plural Nationhood

One can observe growing interest to indigenous identity in Nepali poetry in recent research. For instance, Pokhrel (2024) explores contemporary Kirant poetry and discovers that poets belonging to Rai and Limbu ethnicities deconstruct dominant narratives of nation and nationalism using local myths, folklore, rituals, indigenous symbols, sociocultural values, and ethnic issues. Rai (2025) shares similar views on the possibility of reimagining Nepali nationhood through plural consciousness, recognition, and coexistence in indigenous poetry.

Such results are extremely important for interpreting the contemporary tendency towards free verse. As the poetic field becomes more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse, there is no longer sufficient one inherited formal structure for the purpose of universal standard. The ability of free verse to create a flexible basis for the presence of various speech rhythms, cultural references, oral traditions, and identity positions becomes apparent.

The change is not only related to the form. It also implies questions about who can speak, what kind of language can be considered poetic, and whose experiences should be included in the literary discourse. Social plurality usually coincides with formal plurality. Contemporary poems often go back and forth between local idioms and standard Nepali, oral tradition and written text, individual and historical experience.

Culture and Interdisciplinarity

As Adhikari (2023) demonstrates, there is high cultural intersubjectivity in contemporary Nepali poetry involving traditional culture, constructed culture, and ethnic culture. The result of the study is the conclusion that cultural intersubjectivity gives multidimensionality and intellectual richness to poetry. Such a result explains contemporary heterogeneity of vocabulary, imagery, and references in free verse poems.

Modern poets can find inspiration in religion, history, pop culture, politics, anthropology, ecology, migration, philosophy, and their own life experiences. The poem becomes an interdisciplinary product rather than an exclusively lyrical one. This becomes possible due to the flexibility of form which can embrace both conceptual elaboration and image, narrative and reflection, colloquial language and literature.

This trend also demonstrates how the tendency shifts from treating the poem as an independent aesthetic product to the poem as a venue of cultural dialogue. This does not mean that aesthetics become unimportant. Instead, they become more and more often achieved via juxtaposition, intertextuality, irony, rhythm, and symbolical layering.

Ecology, Rural Life, and Material Experience

Finally, recent research also demonstrates how the theme of ecology and rural life becomes more and more important. Khadka (2025), in his analysis of the poem "Love Labour" by Sita Ram Adhikari, mentions organic images, personification, metaphor and free verse as key features of the poem reflecting the rural labour, cultural heritage and sacredness of the soil. It is also significant since this study mentions free verse explicitly as one of stylistic aspects of the poem.

The importance of the above mentioned development is not limited by only one poem. Rural life, rural labour, rural land, migration, ecological problems, and cultural heritage are integral parts of social experience of Nepal. Flexible form gives an opportunity to the poet to combine the description of concrete material reality with philosophical reflection. The poem can move from the field to the family, from the soil to memories, and from the labour to the identity without restrictions of fixed forms.

Existential and Spiritual Dimensions

Contemporary free verse is not limited to only social and political criticism. Neupane (2024), in his analysis of the poem "Unseen Existence" by Sitaram Adhikari, shows how the poem demonstrates stylistic richness in dealing with the existential and spiritual themes.

This is significant because the history of modern poetry has been referred to as a shift in theme from spirituality or tradition to a secular social focus. The evidence from Nepal reveals that a more complex picture exists where spirituality, philosophy, nature, ethics, social critique, and existential uncertainty co-exist. Free verse allows this kind of multiplicity since it does not depend on any particular rhetorical mode. A poem can be reflective in some sections, conversational in others, and argumentative somewhere else.

Methods

Research Design

A qualitative systematic-narrative review was used in this study. Narrative synthesis was preferred due to the heterogeneity of the existing literature on Nepali free verse which considers different poets, works, poems, periods, themes, and theories. Thus, narrative synthesis enables a comparison of findings without misleading statistics.

Search Strategy

An academic search was undertaken using various combinations of the following keywords: "free verse" AND Nepal; "Nepali poetry" AND free verse; "Nepali prose poetry"; "gadyakavita" AND Nepal; "contemporary Nepali poetry"; "modern Nepali poetry"; "Nepali poetry" AND rhythm; "Nepali poetry" AND identity; "Nepali poetry" AND resistance; "Nepali poetry" AND indigenous; and "Nepali poetry" AND stylistic analysis. Search focused on journal sites, DOI pages and other scholarly databases allowing checking article title, author, publication year, journal name, and DOI.

Eligibility Criteria

Studies were included if they were (a) scholarly research articles, (b) contained a verifiable DOI, (c) published in the period between 2021 and 2025, (d) examined Nepali poetry, contemporary Nepali literature, poetry form, rhythm, style, identity, or other literary matters closely related, and (e) contained findings of value for the interpretation of formal and thematic development related to free verse. Articles lacking DOI were excluded from the evidence regardless of their relevance because of the need for the compliance with the author's instructions requiring the use of only DOI articles.

Study Selection

An initial search returned a larger number of sources. Titles and abstracts were then checked for their relevance to the topic. Duplicates and articles without a verifiable DOI were excluded. The rest of the studies were evaluated for their relevance in terms of methods and topics. Since the aim of the study was synthesis and not meta-analysis, studies were not rated with any numerical scores for quality. Instead, their methodology, object, major findings and relevance to the free verse were extracted.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Author, year, literary object, methodology, primary topic/formal feature, and relevancy to the free verse trend were noted for each selected study. Then, the evidence was categorized thematically: formal freedom/rhythm; modernity/experimentation; social realism/rebellion; gender; war/trauma; indigenous identity; culture; ecology/rural life; existential and spiritual topics; and digital literary dissemination.

Limitations of the Review

This literature review has three main limitations. First, DOI-based study inclusion might overlook relevant Nepali literary studies in publications that lack DOI registration. Second, the selected studies are mostly qualitative and tend to be text-centered; hence, the literature review can hardly claim statistical measurement of the frequency of free verse in Nepal. Third, the terms "free verse" and "prose poetry" have inconsistent meanings for some researchers. This review considers prose poetry as adjacent evidence, not free verse automatically.

Results

Thematic and Formal Synthesis

Based on the analysis of the reviewed studies, a persistent movement toward formal freedom in Nepali poetry emerges. The strongest evidence is related not to the prevalence of free verse in terms of numbers but the recurring presence of flexible lineation, prose-poetic forms, stylistic innovation, colloquial language syntax, and non-metrical rhythm in research on modern poetry.

Table 1 contains the principal DOI bearing studies used in this review.

Table 1

Selected DOI-bearing studies relevant to the free verse trend in Nepal

Author(s)	Year	Main literary focus	Method/approach	Relevance to free verse
Author(s)	Year	Main literary focus	Method/approach	Relevance to free verse

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.68148/q11a2012>

Shahi	2021	Devkota and modernity	Qualitative literary analysis	Modernist formal experimentation and rejection of fixed stability
Baral	2021	Contemporary Nepali prose poetry	Descriptive textual analysis	Stylistic deviation in prose-poetic form
Baral	2021	Contemporary prose poems and rasa	Library-based textual analysis	Traditional aesthetics within modern flexible forms
Paudyal & Baral	2021	Nepali war poetry	Historical-critical analysis	Shift from heroic form/theme toward critical and peace-oriented poetry
Sharma & Baral	2021	Mohan Koirala's long poem	Descriptive textual analysis	Experimental language and stylistic deviation
Baral	2022	Indian Nepali prose poetry	Descriptive textual analysis	Flexible form and vakrokti-based stylistic experimentation
Gurung	2022	Sarita Tiwari's long prose poem	Stylistic/rhythmic analysis	Lineation, parallelism, punctuation, segmentation and rhythm
Baral, Subedi, & Gautam	2023	Sirjan Aviral's "Cantonment" poems	Qualitative psychological analysis	Fragmented social and psychological experience
Adhikari	2023	Contemporary Nepali poetry and culture	Textual analysis	Cultural plurality and interdisciplinary expression
Lamichhane & Neupane	2024	Pasinako Ghar poems	Literary analysis	Gender, social reality,

				spirituality and personal voice
Pokhrel	2024	Contemporary Kirant poetry	Qualitative textual analysis	Indigenous identity, myths, folklore and plural nationhood
Timalsina	2024	Devkota and Nepali modernity	Review and critical synthesis	Modernity and changing poetic consciousness
Neupane	2024	"Unseen Existence"	Stylistic close reading	Existential and spiritual themes in contemporary poetry
Neupane	2025	Nepali literature and digital diaspora	Bibliometric and textual analysis	Digital circulation and changing literary research field
Magarati & Bist	2025	Dalit poetry anthology	Discourse and representation analysis	Resistance, exclusion and counter-discourse
Khadka	2025	"Love Labour"	New Criticism and ecocriticism	Explicit use of free verse for rural/ecological themes
Paudel	2025	Pyala-sanga Naya Kabita	Close reading/textual analysis	Contemporary reality, irony, existentialism and social themes

Source. Author's compilation of DOI bearing studies.

The information in Table 1 shows that free verse needs to be understood as part of a larger transformation instead of a formal phenomenon. Studies that investigate the formal features of prose poetry, rhythm, and free verse illustrate formal flexibility, whereas the other categories of studies show experiences that may be addressed with formal flexibility.

Secondly, there is the result concerning rhythm. It turns out that the rhythm in the contemporary poem is often created using line breaks, parallelism, punctuation, repetition, segmentation, syntax, sound, and semantics. Gurung (2022) gives especially strong evidence about this, whereas Crone (2023) provides support for the interpretation that rhythm is still a core characteristic of a poem without a metrical organization.

Thirdly, it is the expansion of themes. The themes that are found in the reviewed literature are those of social reality, political conflict, gender, caste, indigenous identity, culture, ecology, spirituality, and existential experience. This trend shows that formal flexibility correlates with the expansion of the field of social life that Nepali poetry represents.

Finally, it is the growing role of plural identity. Pokhrel (2024) and Magarati & Bist (2025) provide a clear illustration of how contemporary poetry can criticize the dominant stories by bringing forth indigenous and Dalit perspectives. Free verse is convenient in such an environment since it permits incorporating the native idioms, imagery, oral tradition, and speech.

Fifth, the phenomenon of hybridization persists. There is no clear-cut dichotomy between verse and prose. Many contemporary Nepali poets create their works within an intermediate zone where prose syntax, lineated text, narrative drive, and lyric condensation coexist at once. This hybrid nature is among the most prominent features of contemporary poetry experimentation.

Figure 1

Analytical model of the free verse trend in Nepal



Source. *Author's synthesis based on the reviewed DOI-bearing literature.*

The analytical framework presented in Figure 1 illustrates how free verse is best regarded as a dialogue between form and context. Historically determined modernity forces poets to experiment; experiments yield flexible poetic forms; flexible forms allow more extensive vocabulary use and hybridization; and all these formal features make it possible to represent more pluralistic experiences.

Discussion

The review proves that the tendency of free verse in Nepal cannot be sufficiently explained by the oversimplified thesis of abandonment of metre by Nepali poets. Such oversimplification reduces a complicated literary evolution to its negative formulation. The evidence indicates rather the redistribution of formal control in contemporary poetry: when metre and rhyme are not dominant anymore, other principles of composition become more apparent: length of line, syntax, repetition, punctuation, sound, semantic rhythm, image sequence, and visual spacing.

This conclusion is consistent with the claims of Crone (2023) that rhythm is a vital generic feature despite lack of metrical organization. The same is true about Gurung (2022)'s analysis of a Nepali long prose poem where rhythm is created by means of lineation, parallelism, deviation, segmentation, address, and punctuation. It is crucial since it undermines the misconception about free verse being mere prose written in short lines.

The review provides the basis for understanding the concept of freedom historically. Shahi (2021) and Timalšina (2024) demonstrate that the modernization of Nepali poetry included transformation of literary consciousness and awareness, and experimentations. Thus, the free verse should be seen from the perspective of history of modernization rather than a mere style. Moreover, Paudyal and Baral (2021) show the correlation between representation of war and transformation of social consciousness. Thus, the transformation of thematic and formal aspects is mutually reinforcing.

There is ample thematic evidence. In contemporary Nepali poetry, one may observe the increasing preoccupation with socially diverse and politically controversial experiences. In particular, Paudel (2025) mentions poverty, deprivation, pain, irony, progressive consciousness, existential thought, and contemporary reality. Meanwhile, Magarati and Bist (2025) mention caste discrimination, exclusion and resistance. Pokhrel (2024) mentions indigenous identity, myths, folklore, and ethnic problems. Khadka (2025) connects the freedom of verse to rural labour, cultural heritage and ecology. Neupane (2024) shows the suitability of contemporary poetry for existential and spiritual research. All these works indicate that the free verse is a flexible vessel for various experiences.

However, gender issues need a separate consideration. Gurung (2022) takes into account the long prose poem dedicated to women's existence within rhythmic analysis, while Lamichhane and Neupane (2024) pay attention to women's struggles and social expectations in the context of spiritual love. These works do not prove the femininity of the free verse itself but indicate that flexible forms are used to express personal and gender experience.

In addition, the indigenous turn needs discussion. Pokhrel (2024) and Rai (2025) discuss the role of contemporary poetry in the process of redefinition of national identity. This issue is important because the issue of literary form is also connected to literary authority. If national poetry includes many cultural memories, languages, myths, rituals, and identities, literary form should be able to accommodate all of them. The free verse is one of the options.

At the same time, it is necessary to be cautious. One should not say that all contemporary poems in Nepal are free and metrical poetry is replaced by free verse. The review does not prove this quantitative conclusion. Traditional lyric, songs, metrical verse, ghazal and other literary forms are also present in the broad literary field. The more reliable conclusion would be that free verse is an influential form of formal choice in a pluralistic poetic field.

Another area worth investigating concerns the connection between free verse and prose poetry. In Nepal, the term gadyakavita is commonly used to refer to one of the main genres of modern poetry writing. It is evident from the works of Baral (2021a, 2021b), Baral (2022), and Gurung (2022) that prose poetry writing may also have rhythm, style, figures, and literary structure. Yet prose poetry does not use lineation as its fundamental element, whereas free verse still keeps lines. For this reason, in future Nepali research, these genres should be distinguished carefully.

For this reason, a distinction must be made between two interpretations of “trend.” Under the first interpretation, free verse is certainly part of the continuous evolution of Nepali poetry. However, under the second interpretation, the existing literature, which is based on the DOI method, does not provide enough data for calculating the prevalence of free verse in Nepal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper shows that free verse has established itself as a form of poetry that is lasting and vital in Nepal. This is not due to the fact that free verse is opposed to metrical poetry, but because it has created an alternative poetic form by basing it on flexible line breaks, speech rhythms, repetitions, punctuation, syntax, semantics, imagery, silences, and arrangement.

Formal flexibility has been an accompaniment to the expansion in themes found in the cited scholarly works. Modern Nepalese poems have themes ranging from social disparity, poverty, gender, war, trauma, castes, indigenouness, culture, ecology, labor in the rural areas, spirituality, and existential anxiety among others. The multiplicity of the themes has led to the sustained appeal of the free verse form.

The significance of this essay is in showing that the phenomenon of free verse poetry must be explained in terms of the interplay between formal freedom and social plurality. The modern Nepali poem has become an arena where various identity, memory, culture, and politics have converged. It does not generate plurality on its own but provides poets with the means to express plurality through its malleable form.

The review suggests future research conduct corpus-based investigations of Nepali poetry in order to determine the frequency of free verse in different time periods, geographical areas, generations, and platforms of publication. It is necessary to distinguish free verse from prose poems and other non-metrical poems, create clear criteria for coding the samples, and study digital poems alongside with printed ones. Future research might include investigations of women's poetry, Dalit poetry, indigenous poetry, migrant poetry, diaspora poetry, ecological poetry, and poetry that spreads via social media. Comparative research on Nepali poetry, Maithili poetry, Newar poetry, Limbu poetry, Rai poetry, etc. can contribute to the clarification whether formal freedom works in the same way in the multilingual literary space of Nepal.

Author Contribution

The author conceived the review, formulated the research questions, conducted literature search and screening, extracted and analyzed the evidence, created tables and analysis model, wrote and revised the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no competing interest.

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